

POEMS  
BY  
J B SELKIRK



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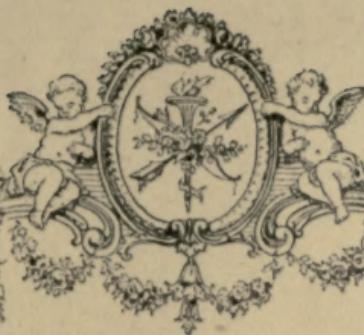
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POEMS  
BY  
J·B·SELKIRK.

Author of "Ethics & Aesthetics of Modern  
Poetry"

"Bible Truths with Shakesperian Parallel's" etc.



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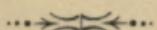
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Miscellaneous Poems.





## *GIOTTO'S CAMPANILE AND BELLS OF FLORENCE.*

WHAT magic hangs about thee, dear old tower,  
That when I look upon thee, face to face,  
Thy beauteous presence yields a mystic power  
That binds me to the place ?

Something beyond thy sweet and simple beauty—  
Something beyond thy more than human voice,  
That seems to speak to all of love and duty—  
Bidding the world rejoice.

A something more than strikes the outward ear  
Wells through thy mellow music, driving hence  
All earthly thoughts, till heaven's voice I hear  
Touching the inner sense.

A fitting voice for thee, thou white-robed angel,  
Standing in marble purity so fair,  
For ever sending forth thy sweet evangel  
Up through the summer air.

Could I but tell the world what thou art saying,  
And in some strong undying way unload  
Thy rapture,—all that thou art singing, praying,  
In the sweet light of God !

Art thou of earth, or one of heaven's choir,  
Holding a consecrated soul up there,  
Uplifting to the heaven of thy desire  
Thy voice of song and prayer ?

Tell us—for thou art nearer God than us,  
And hast communion of thine own—what balm  
Of hidden love is at thy heart that thus  
Attunes thy holy psalm ?

Or say, art thou a poet, one who borrows  
The fire of heaven to wing his words with power,  
And sitteth, singing his immortal sorrows,  
Up in his heart's white tower ?

Say, art thou one of that immortal throng—  
One giving all for nothing he can take ;  
Who thankless drains a bleeding heart of song  
For this poor world's sake ?

Thou hast a poet's power upon me, and,  
Beneath thy hallowed voice, sweet tears are shed ;  
And willing memory at thy command  
Gives back her buried dead.

Again my soul is bathed as if with dew  
Of that sweet time that brings a heavenly mood,  
And gathers round it all it ever knew  
Of beautiful and good.

Again the past, at thine enchantment, brings  
Her keys, and all my soul within me waits,  
While heavenly troops of long-forgotten things  
Pass through the golden gates.

Ring on ! ring out your riches, holy bells !  
The weary world has need of all your song ;  
Your soothing voice of saintly sorrow tells  
No tale of earthly wrong.

Ring on ! ye lead us to the higher life ;  
Though hearts are sere, and sorrowing eyes are wet,  
We follow you, or, dying in the strife,  
Shall win the heavens yet.

*THE FLOWER'S MESSAGE.*

A wanderer once, flower-gathering in the land  
Where Proserpine, beside the midland sea,  
Wove garlands of the star-anemone,  
Descried the flower he looked for, close at hand,  
Yet guarded from him by a prickly strand  
Of wreathed acanthus; thorns of that same tree  
Men made a crown of once in Galilee,  
To mock the King they could not understand.

Was it the red blood colour of the flower,  
So near the thorns, that crossed and interlaced it,  
That stayed his eager hand with unseen power,  
Bidding him leave the prize where God had placed it,  
And hold more lightly every earthly dower  
That perishes when we have once embraced it ?

AMALFI,

*RAIN.*

RAIN! rain!

Oh, sweet Spring rain!

The world has been calling for thee in vain  
Till now, and at last thou art with us again.

Oh, how shall we welcome the gentle showers,  
The baby-drink of the first-born flowers,

That falls out of heaven as falleth the dew,  
And touches the world to beauty anew?

Oh, rain! rain! dost thou feel and see  
How the hungering world has been waiting for thee?

How every crack of the earth drinks down  
With lips that but late were haggard and brown?

How streamlets whisper, and leaves are shaken,  
And winter-sleeping things awaken,

And look around them, and rub their eyes,  
And laugh into life at the glad surprise;

How the tongues are loosened that late were dumb,  
For "the time of the singing of birds has come";

How every tender flower holds up,  
In trembling balance, its tiny cup,

To catch the food that in sultry weather  
Must hold its little life together ?  
Oh, blessings on thee, thou sweet Spring rain,  
That callest dead things to life again !

Rain ! rain !  
Oh, Summer rain !  
Tell me why dost thou complain,  
And streak with tears my window-pane ?  
Say, sweet Summer, why disguise  
In Winter's garb thy bright blue skies ?  
Tell me, why shouldst thou be weeping,  
When all the world else is keeping  
Holiday ? When every sound  
Is calling on thee to keep the round,  
The chatter of swallows beneath the eaves,  
The breezy music of murmuring leaves ;  
While sitting unseen in the odorous larches  
The blackbird sends out through the tasseled arches  
That song of his, with the deep long note,  
As if pouring his soul through his open throat :  
And hark ! that voice, the sweetest of all  
The singers in earth's glad madrigal,  
The streamlet that dances down the hill,  
To her own sweet voice, at her own sweet will—

In again ! out again ! leaping along,  
Her music is motion, her motion a song.  
The stones about her feet rejoice,  
Touched by the magic of that voice.  
Through ferny-throated fissures gargling,  
Of waters into waters warbling.  
Nay, the sun himself, despite thy fears,  
Is peeping and laughing through thy tears.  
Come, come, sweet Summer, and dry thine eyes ;  
But still through her tears the Summer replies—  
“ Alas ! 'tis not for me to know  
Why these sad tears of mine should flow,  
Why joy should fill the heart as full  
As sorrow does, and overrule  
The soul like this. My life, as thine,  
Moves to an influence divine—  
Bound by the same mysterious bond  
To the life behind it, and life beyond,  
And so compassed about with its hopes and its fears,  
That looking for laughter it falls upon tears—  
Yea, and out of its sorrow and sore dismay  
Oft finding the path to a brighter day.  
Then suffer awhile these tears to flow,  
The after heavens will be clearer so.”  
So sang the Summer as the sweet rain fell:  
But the source of her sorrow she could not tell.

Rain! rain!  
Wild Winter rain?  
Hark at the winds how they howl again  
As the rushing waters come down amain,  
And lash, and wrestle, and writhe, and hiss—  
The fiends must be loose in a night like this.  
As for me, I am taking the grim delight  
Of facing the elements in their might,  
Up here alone, and at such an hour  
(It is near midnight in the minster tower).  
On the great cathedral wall I stand,  
Holding like death with either hand,  
Watching the stormy demons fight  
(God help the houseless in such a night).  
Though I cling to the feet of the hugely colossal  
Proportions of Angelo's giant apostle;  
Though I stand by the base of the big stone piers  
That have borne the shock and the passion of years,—  
The stones that have held, high up in the air,  
The great bell tower for centuries there,—  
Yet I tremble to think, as the storm grows apace,  
That some night the pillars will fall from their place  
And—Merciful God! what a flash was there?  
How it seemed to leap out of the central stair,  
And light for a moment with lurid fire

Every point of the great north spire,  
Then danced down the roof from shelf to shelf,  
While I had not a hand to cross myself ;  
And close on the back of it, ever and under,  
Leapt up in a moment the quick, short thunder,  
Till the earth seemed to reel, as if inwardly shaken  
With dread at the thought of a life forsaken—  
As if God had thrown up the reins of the world,  
And given it away to be hustled and hurled  
Heedless along as the winds compel,  
Whether the road be to heaven or hell ?  
Like a maniac robbed of reason and will,  
With never a law of its own to fulfil !  
But there goes my cowl ! and I stand headbare ;  
I durst not lift my hand to my hair,  
For should I let go for a moment—pshaw !  
I'm over the roof like a bundle of straw  
For the storm-fiends to hoot at, and batter, and ban,  
And St. Clement's is short of a sacristan.  
So I cling to the legs of St. Peter, in stone  
(He's a rock up here, let the heathen rage on);  
Ay, would that I had the heretic here,  
With his mouthing omniscience and creedless sneer,  
An hour on the roof might bring to a pause  
His placid expoundings of Nature's laws,

And teach him the diff'rence in heaven's own way  
'Twixt God the potter and Man the clay.  
But hark up there, in the minister tower  
The big bell booms out the midnight hour,  
While the storm leaps up as if ready to fight,  
That none but himself shall be heard to-night ;  
For out of the twelve I heard but four—  
The wind ran away with the rest in a roar,  
And battered and beat them about the spire ;  
And, clashing and tossing them higher and higher,  
Tore them to shreds, far up in the air,  
Till they died out at last in a yell of despair ;  
And the torrent still pours on the roof like a river,  
As if heaven had decreed it should rain for ever,  
Till the grinning stone devil on the western spout  
Through his huge red throat sends the waters out  
With a glut and a gurgle that seems to say,  
"I like it, I like it—storm away !"  
While over his head, in a niche up there,  
With eyes uplifted in endless prayer,  
Kneels godly Augustine, just as when  
He pleaded on earth for the souls of men.  
His gaze seems to pierce through the lurid levens  
Far into the plains of the restful heavens,  
With the greatness about him, and calm control,  
The silent repose of a sovereign soul.  
As I look on his face I seem to hear

His grand old prayer, serene and clear—  
“ Blest be the storm, whatever it be,  
That drives us at last, O God, to Thee ! ”  
And the words I so often have sung and said  
Seemed to strike anew as I bowed my head  
To the sweetest of saints and the best of men,  
And my heart responded “ Amen ! Amen ! ”

---

### *THE DAUGHTER.*

MY little daughter grows apace,  
Her dolls are now quite out of date ;  
It seems that I must take their place,  
We have become such friends of late —  
We might be ministers of state,  
Discussing projects of great peril,  
Such strange new questionings dilate  
The beauty of my little girl.

How tall she grows ! What subtle grace  
Doth every movement animate ;  
With garments gathered for the race  
She stands, a goddess slim and straight.

Young Artemis, when she was eight,  
Among the myrtle-bloom and laurel—  
I doubt if she could more than mate  
The beauty of my little girl.

The baby passes from her face,  
Leaving the lines more delicate,  
Till in her features I can trace  
Her mother's smile, serene, sedate.  
'Tis something at the hands of fate,  
To watch the onward years unfurl  
Each line which goes to consecrate  
The beauty of my little girl.

ENVOI.

Lord I hear me, as in prayer I wait :  
Thou givest all ; guard Thou my pear ;  
And, when Thou countest at the Gate  
Thy jewels, count my little girl.



*AOEDE.*

BEND thou thine eyes on me,  
Sweet Poesy, and give me of thy grace ;  
I leave the blustering world and turn to thee,  
To seek the holy smile upon thy face :  
Without thee life were wretched and forlore—  
Touch thou my heart once more.

The world is heedless now,  
And careth not to watch thy beauteous ways ;  
They cannot see the light upon thy brow,  
As did thy worshippers in olden days :  
Gone, like a dream, thy sacred Helicon,  
And all the light thereon !

Thy grove, thy shaded well,  
No more remembered in the world's cold sense,  
Oh teach thou me, thy servant, yet to dwell  
Within the reach of thy sweet influence ;  
Nor grovel down into the soul that feeds,  
Only on mortal needs !

If all thy songs be sung,

The blame is ours : the world is changed and old ;  
But thou, a maid immortal, ever young,  
Thou changest not—thou wilt not yet be cold  
To such as love thee in the heart's true way—  
Then stay, sweet goddess, stay !

They live that love thee yet.

Here, at thy feet, beholding such an one,  
Accept his vows : though all the world forget,  
He swears that while within his veins shall run  
The blood of life, that life is only thine,  
By all thy ways divine !

I'd rather live with thee

A creedless life—like those that long ago  
Crowned thee with flowers in vine-trailed Thessaly—  
Than join with men that creep their creeds beow,  
Clothing in sanctity their mammon lies  
And hideous uncharities !

I'd rather live apart

In poverty—of all the world unknown—  
Might I but hear thy voice within my heart  
The while I walked in summer woods alone.  
I care not what blind fortune shall assign  
If thou art only mine.

*SPRING.*

I STAND alone among the pines in May,  
In that sweet time when earliest bees are humming,  
And birds are loudest on the budding spray,  
And Summer sends in front a glorious day  
To tell the longing year that she is coming.  
Her heart is full because of her delay :  
So full that she must weep sweet dews, that fall  
In blessful tears through all the lonely night.  
Oh Thou Eternal Source of our delight,  
Creator and Controller of it all !  
I thank Thee here, that I, Thy creature too,  
A world-worn weary heart, can rest awhile,  
And worship Thee, as Thy dumb creatures do,  
In silent thankfulness that knows no guile.

BOWHILL.



*AN EXILE IN SIBERIA.*

(THE KARA MINES. \*)

HE had a happy home, once on a time,  
A house made holy with the silvery chime  
Of children's laughter ; sounds that cling and climb

About the shattered memories of men  
Once banished from them, never more again  
To come within their kindly human ken.

So happy once ! Now, neither joy nor fear,  
Nor any sorrow life may bring him near,  
Can cheat him of another smile or tear.

He had a fair and goodly garden too,  
Where he had mingled flowers of homelier hue  
With many, to his climate strange and new.

Within its walls, seeds of a sunnier clime  
Made beautiful the blaze of summer's prime,  
And blent their odours with his rose and thyme.

\* Worked by convict labour for the benefit of the Czar.

Within its walls, love wandered hand in hand,  
Mother and children there, a happy band,  
None happier than he in all the land.

But that is over ; wounded from within,  
Betrayed by men he sheltered from their sin,  
Men dead to ties of kindness or of kin,

The very outcome of his mother's womb  
Rose up against him : joined the common spume  
That sent him shackled to his living tomb.

His house, wife, children, garden, all have fled ;  
He sees them now, like spectres from the dead  
That haunt his broken heart, his fevered head.

At midnight, in the dim, dream-darkened air,  
He sees, within a garden, bleak and bare,  
A solitary cypress standing there ;

And one lone man, made mad with death's delay,  
His hands uplifted, knees upon the clay,  
Pleading with God that he might pass that way,

Upon his forehead stands the beaded sweat  
Of agony, while still his prayer is met  
With one returning word, " Not yet," " Not yet."

See where he falls! a mass of rags and shame,  
With none to pity, none that know his name,—  
Madness at last has seized his ruined frame.

Look on him, fiends who fatten on his fate !  
Join hands and dance, hell-hoofs, and hearts of hate,  
God is not mocked, although His hour be late.

---

### *POESY.*

**P**OESY, I love thee.

Earth, in endless praise of thee,  
Of all the sweet wild ways of thee,  
Sings for ever ! And my song  
Is but another in the throng,  
To tell thee how we love thee.  
Listen to the singing now  
Pouring from the topmost bough  
That waves its green above thee !  
Downward to thy dewy feet  
Where low voices mix and meet,  
And winds among the grasses sweet  
Whisper that we love thee.

Minstrel mine, I hear thee ;  
All that loving praise of thine,  
All those liquid lays of thine,  
I have seen them, I have heard.  
Now I give thee thy reward,  
Poet, dost thou hear me ?  
I will not mock thee with a name,  
Thankless gifts of earthly fame,  
No other joy a-near thee.  
I will give thee love for love,  
I will keep thy heart above,  
And in thy sorrow cheer thee.

I will give thee heavenly food  
To sustain the poet's mood,  
Wine and oil and holy meat,  
That will make thy memory sweet :  
Poet, never fear me.  
When the days are dark and drear  
I will keep thy vision clear ;  
And in the world's ungrateful fight  
I will keep thy heart aright :  
Poet, dost thou hear me ?

*EARLY SUMMER ON THE  
MEDITERRANEAN.*

UNDER the shade of an olive-tree,  
In a garden with flowers aglow,  
Whose terraces slope to the shining sea,  
Which lies like a mirror below,

I lie full length on a tiger skin—  
With a skin of my own well browned—  
The palms of my hands tucked under my chin,  
And my elbows stuck in the ground,

The garden where you, love, and I have been  
So many an hour together,  
Watching the blue sea's changing sheen  
In the bright Bas-Alpine weather.

So soft an air creeps through the trees,  
The small leaves tremble none—  
Enough just to break with a tempering breeze  
The heat of a southern sun.

The grey old olive around me throws  
A glamour of golden gloom,  
And the air is rich with the breath of the rose,  
The jasmine, and orange bloom.

You remember the walk you were wont to admire,  
With its roses each side of the way,  
Where the pathway ends in a fountain of fire—  
The golden acacia ?

'Tis there I lie, as in days before,  
And dream to the ocean's sound,  
As the billows come in on the tideless shore  
With a sea-voice deep and round.

'Twixt wave and wave, as the voices float,  
Such motionless pauses lie,  
I can hear the faint cicala's note, .  
And the laden bee go by.

And ever again a louder roll—  
A wave with a voice of his own—  
Comes in with the cry of its breaking soul,  
And dies in a long sea-moan.

But out in mid-ocean, miles from the shore,  
It is still as still can be,  
Leagues upon leagues, an opal floor,  
Of the great unbroken sea—

As fair as when creation's rod  
Rested from its employ,  
When the morning stars and the sons of God  
Sang together for joy,

I rest my eyes where, thin and fine,  
As far as sight can see,  
The utmost belt of the faint sea-line  
Touches eternity.

And the soul passing out, as it were in a dream,  
Sees all the world anew,  
And things unsought for flash and gleam  
Within its widened view.

And I think of the kingdoms the sea hath seen  
In the distant days of yore—  
Of the pomps and the splendours that once have been,  
Now silent for evermore.

The long dead dynasties of old—  
Phœnicia, Greece, and Rome,  
And Tyre, that carried her purple and gold  
Athwart the Cyprian foam.

Of Egypt's glory, great awhile,  
Ere she of passionate breath,  
The dread, sweet serpent of old Nile,  
Hugged Antony to death.

Before the voice of Greece was hushed  
In war's discordant peal,  
And all her lyric heart lay crushed  
Beneath great Cæsar's heel.

Days when the tuneful world was peace,  
And happier deeds were sung,  
When all the golden isles of Greece  
With rhythmic numbers rung.

Oh waters of the rich-isled East!  
'Twas thou that gave them birth,  
And rocked upon thy sunny breast  
The great ones of the earth.

Where red *Æ*gean fruits hang ripe,  
Or where the streamlet pours  
Soft music to a shepherd's pipe  
On fair Sicilian shores.

'Twas there the immortals spoke, and then  
The words that cling and climb,  
They echo yet in the hearts of men,  
And shall to the end of time.

Thy song, whatever song takes root,  
Shall find a vernal birth  
With that great language which has put  
Its girdle round the earth.

And all who use the mighty tongue  
Of England still look back  
Where thou across the sea of song  
Hast left thy shining track.

Byron, and Landor, and Keats, have caught  
The glory of thy name,  
And Browning's ægis richly wrought,  
Reflects the ancient flame.

Our laureate—melody's own mouth—  
By music pure and strong,  
“The palms and Temples of the South”  
Has wedded to his song.

These sought thee, loved thee, sang of thee,  
Drank in thy purer air;  
And thou—oh pearl-enamoured sea,  
We threw thee a jewel there!

When Shelley's soul, with wings unfurled,  
Weary of strife and strain,  
Like a thing of light sailed out of the world,  
And came no more again.

But hark! the nightingale's voice has come,  
And echoes on peach and pine,  
And a beetle goes by with the louder hum  
That tells of the day's decline.

A breeze comes out of the cloudy tower  
Where the sky and the ocean meet,  
And the sea-floor breaks into blossom and flower  
At the touch of invisible feet.

My dream dissolves like the breaking light  
On the wind-struck mirror below,  
And I cry to the sea "Good-night, good-night!"  
As I rise to the feet and go.

---

### *A MODERN MISERERE.*

(THE BISHOP, RETURNING FROM A SCIENCE  
CONGRESS, RUMINATES.)

○ Lord, our times are cold and dead,  
Religion but a world's show,  
Where truth is starved, and hope is fled,  
And faith is burning low.  
The wisdom of the sweet old days  
Is trodden in the common ways.  
Miserere Domine !

No doctrine but the kind that's grown  
To-day hath any man received :  
It must be noisy and new-blown  
Before it is believed.  
The ripened thought that ruled the past  
Is losing hold and falling fast.

Miserere Domine !

Truth, Lord, is crucified afresh  
Upon the modern cross of science,  
If not with mangling of the flesh,  
With all the old defiance,—  
With just the same ingenious art  
And moral blindness of the heart.

Miserere Domine !

And we must join the vulgar fray,  
And e'en be taught how truth can grow  
By men who have forgot to pray  
In blind desire to know.  
Lord ! how the devil still can harden  
With that old apple of the garden !

Miserere Domine !

The garden, said I ? that, alas !  
Has long been cast without the pale  
Of modern creeds ; effete and crass,  
At best an old wife's tale,  
With all its promise, all its glory,  
Pruned down to make a children's story.

Miserere Domine !

They think to break Thy word, forsooth,  
By picking here and there a hole :  
They scratch the husk of Eden's truth,  
And think to reach its soul.

They do not see the sword of flame  
Still standing at the gate the same.

Miserere Domine !

Good Lord ! that men should sit and burn  
Beneath the philosophic doubt,  
The learned logic that would turn  
Heaven's secrets inside out !  
And rearrange our holy things  
In self-complacent vapourings.

Miserere Domine !

To sit and listen by the hour  
(And feel half guilty by connivance)  
To bland concessions of God's power,  
His forethought and contrivance,—  
The maunderings of the pious hack  
Who pats creation on the back.

Miserere Domine !

Or worse, stuffed out with science' saws,  
A boasted age's educator,  
God's creature proving from God's laws  
That there is no Creator !  
The things that owe to Thee their force  
Turned round to spurn the primal source !  
Miserere Domine !

Disciples of the modern schools,  
Whose culture scorns the common herd  
Of miracle-believing fools,  
That all along have erred,  
And still obstruct the world's advance  
With antiquated ignorance,  
Miserere Domine !

Philosophers, who laugh at faith,  
And all its miracles despise,  
Though miracles of life and death  
Stare daily in their eyes.  
In faiths that give Thy word the lie,  
How fond is their credulity !  
Miserere Domine !

Oh teach us, Lord, before we fall  
Too utterly away from Thee,  
That knowledge is not all in all,—  
That in our wisdom we  
May all things know, and yet for us  
Our souls be poor as Lazarus.

Miserere Domine !

Lord, strike not yet. It cannot be  
But this is temporary froth,—  
Upheavings of a troubled sea :  
Earth-darkness, which the growth  
Of Thy sweet light will purge away,  
And chasten to the perfect day.

Miserere Domine !

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*FOR THE DEFENCE.*

**G**YOU ask me why I write in verse ?  
I cannot tell you why, except for pleasure ;  
And so your query, put in prose,  
I'll answer, friend, in measure.

I find it easy. There are those  
Who cannot help it ; hung on music's hinges,  
Rhyme follows thought like some old tune  
That all your memory tinges.

I do not say their thought is good,  
Nor yet can see your reason for supposing  
That just because 'tis writ in verse  
It *must* be worse than prosing.

There cannot be much difference  
Between the verse and prose that's put before us,  
If we are but agreed in this,  
That both the writers bore us.

And surely there's enough of prose  
In life's steep road for those of us who climb it.  
Why should you deem it but a fault  
That one should try to rhyme it ?

There is a happy power in rhyme—  
Laugh as you will—that keeps the blood in motion :  
A sympathetic pulse, whose life  
Beats time to wind and ocean.

A healthful spirit, wild and free,  
Though men materialistic may deride it :  
Their highest reach of stilted prose  
Is starch itself beside it.

There is more virtue in a song  
Than all your high-souled scientific asses  
Will ever manage to reduce  
To its component gases.

You say that every second man  
You meet is certain now to be a poet.  
I envy your acquaintance, and  
Am very pleased to know it.

Statistics is your forte, I know ;  
You're scrupulously truthful in a high sense.  
('Tis sweet to catch a man of prose  
Taking poetic licence.)

But never mind, we need them all,  
Though they may speak of things you take small  
heed of ;  
The poet's wisdom is a kind  
The world now stands in need of.

The wisdom that reveres God's ways,  
And hates the modern self-sufficient folly,  
That would unravel holy things  
With fingering most unholy :

The heart that keeps the great broad faith,  
Pleading no special form or special gesture,  
Prepared to bow before God's truth,  
Whatever be its vesture :

Which feels as well as knows the truth,  
And does not trouble you with proof pedantic,  
Though it may follow it in ways  
The world will call romantic ;—

We need them all in times like these,  
So niggard of disinterested action,  
Lest love degrade to bargaining,  
And truth be lost in faction.

We need them all, we yield too much,  
Submit too meekly to the world's dominion,  
And smile and bow and doff our hats  
Too humbly to opinion.

We trust too much to rules laid down  
By domineering custom and tradition,  
Till thought and freedom fall asleep,  
Or die of inanition.

We need some rugged natural souls  
Who will not trim to the prevailing fashion,  
Who must speak out their open thought,  
In wholesome, honest passion ;

Who will not juggle with the world,  
Nor countersign her jaundiced arbitration,  
Who sit as loosely to her blame  
As to her approbation ;

Who hate the creed that seeks itself,  
And worships God because the world has said it,—  
The holiness that draws on heaven  
To prop an earthly credit.

'Tis good sometimes to stand aside,  
And strip the world of all those earthly lendings  
That make its life a heartless lie  
Of hollowest pretensions.

'Tis good to keep within the heart  
A room where only one's own soul shall enter,  
Yielding the outworks to the world,  
Keeping yourself the centre;

A little sanctum set apart,  
In which to think a thought or sing a measure,  
And stretch your legs and speak your mind,  
According to your pleasure.

And if sometimes within the walls  
Of my soul's room old tunes will yet be ringing,  
Like ghosts that will not rest until  
You give them words for singing.

'Tis idle habit, I admit,  
And cannot boast of any special mission,  
Yet it has uses of a kind  
Worthy of recognition.

It would not do if all of us  
Were grave professors deep and scientific,  
Each thrusting down the other's throat  
His favourite specific—

Each vamping up his own pet view,  
And then some grand pretentious title give it,  
Till we've so many teaching life,  
There's no one left to live it.

'Tis right we should have some to sing,  
If but to set against the world's long faces,  
Lest human nature pine to death  
In circumspection's laces.

Give me the sense of life and light,  
Of freedom's open air and mountain breezes,  
Surrounding all the wandering life  
That sings but what it pleases.

It keeps the spirit fresh and young—  
God knows we soon enough grow old and cautious,  
When poetry, and youth, and fun,  
And all sweet things are nauseous.

So I will rhyme, my friend, while young ;  
If I get old I'll promise you to prose it ;  
You think this letter long enough,  
I dare say, so I'll close it.

I am—

But that I scarcely need  
To tell to one that knows it.

*THE MODERN SPHINX.*

O, RIDDLE hard of solving, ceaseless orb of life revolving,

All-creating, all-dissolving, whence and whither dost thou run ?

Canst thou hear earth's song of gladness ; cry of pain, and death, and sadness ;

All the mirth and all the madness of this world beneath the sun ?

With its crowds deceived, deceiving, still the old false hopes believing,

Every step beyond retrieving, leading downward to the grave ;

With its endless life-stream flowing, myriads coming, myriads going,

Death but reaps what life is sowing, as the wave blots out the wave.

With its crowds believing nothing, taking earth with all  
its loathing,

As the spirit's highest clothing, and the final end of  
all;

Judging man's immortal nature but a dream's distorted  
feature,

Seeing nothing in his stature over things that breed  
and crawl.

Must we take the cold and bloodless creed of the  
contented godless,

The fruitless, flowerless, budless graft of Reason's  
boasted seed,

While the old, "Yea, God hath spoken," stript of all its  
heavenly token,

Is cast aside and broken to make room for man's  
new creed?

Can we give our hearts' compliance to this fate-bound  
creed of science,

With its sneer of cold defiance, holding prayer a  
wasted breath,

While deaf to all appealing, every stroke the wheel is  
dealing

Sends its crowds of victims reeling into dust of  
dreamless death?

Or, shall we seek soul-quarter in the miserable charter  
Of a low, degrading barter – joys of heaven and pains  
of hell ?

As if the God-given banner of a man's immortal honour,  
With a price affixed upon her, were a thing to buy  
and sell !

Shall we bow beneath the preaching of the church's  
garbled teaching,

With its farce of heavenly reaching over lines it must  
not pass ?

With its multiform complexion; every fierce and wrang-  
ling section

Self-asserting a perfection that's denied it in the mass.

Quacks that pour their paid-for thunder through the  
gates of fear and wonder,

Shall we tear their creeds asunder, toss the fragments  
to the skies ?

Priests and preachers leave behind us, with the windy  
words that blind us,

Till the light can hardly find us through the mesh of  
twisted lies ?

Silence, babbler! close beside thee there's a higher word to guide thee,—

All the creeds that chafe and chide thee are but dust of passing strife;

Over all earth's fleeting phases, clashing doctrine, swelling phrases,

God the simpler standard raises of the creed that was a Life.

*That will stand though churches crumble; when the system-mongers stumble*

*In their own distracted jumble, that at least will never fall.*

And when science-doctors scout thee, priests denounce, or bigots flout thee,

Fold the simpler faith about thee, and act justly by them all.

---

### THE SINGER TO THE CRITIC.

**H**ELL that you say is fair, critic,

Well meant, both your smile and your frown,

But neither will alter a hair, critic,

The rule I have long laid down.

My thanks for the kindness you've shown, critic,—  
Your work is most faithfully done ;  
Still I have a faith of my own, critic,  
That I can exchange for none.

You can tell what the time demands, critic,  
The fashions that ebb and flow,—  
You will only receive at my hands, critic,  
Such fruit as I choose to grow,

A free and a fetterless flight, critic,  
That fashion could never control,  
In the air of its own delight, critic,  
Is the law of the singer's soul.

I shall sing from my inner, own heart, critic,  
And never ask any one's leave,  
And shall clothe with my uttermost art, critic,  
The thing I most love and believe.

But the choice must be left to myself, critic,  
And whither I mar it or make it,  
I ask neither plaudit nor pelf, critic,—  
The world may leave it or take it.

And when I have done my best, critic,  
I shall say to my song—"Adieu!"  
To the winds I shall leave the rest, critic,  
And turn to my work anew.

Though all that we say or do, critic,  
Should pass with us under the sod,  
We know that the good and the true, critic,  
Is safe in the hands of God.

And the heart's true music will all be, critic,  
Caught up in men's hearts again,  
As it was, and is, and shall be, critic,  
World without end, amen!

---

*ON A PAINTING OF "A SPRING DAY" IN THE SCOTTISH ACADEMY.*

**H**GAIN Spring's gentle warfare wins its way,  
And grim retreating Winter hangs afar  
His flag of truce on the horizon bar,  
Yielding his power to pale Persephone.  
Mark how the earth in every budding spray

Conceals the ravages of Winter's war,  
In leaf and flower ; while many a golden star  
Of rich gorse blossom lets her perfume stray,  
Her well-armed body-guard around her set,  
The serried spearsmen of Plantagenet.  
God's benison be with the gracious art  
That on the glowing canvas here unfurled,  
Can bring into the city's hungry heart  
The freshness and the fragrance of the world.

---

### *THE END OF THE ARGUMENT.*

I AM a woman, you  
Have man's strong vision : yet it may be said  
What *we* see, we see clearly, though our view  
Be limited.

I feel that I am right,  
And yet 'twere vain in me your creed to call  
In question ; I will hope, on closer sight,  
That after all

We differ but in word,  
We recognise one God by different name ;  
And surely hair's-breadth reasoning is absurd  
Where faith's the same ?

We bow to one great Cause,  
One all-pervading Power from sky to sod ;  
You call it Nature, Force, Eternal Laws,—  
I call it God.

You see Him in the power  
That guides the floating worlds through utmost space,  
And in their shining courses every hour  
Keeps all in place.

You search His works about  
In ways we women scarce can understand,  
Till Earth and Air give all their secrets out  
At your command.

Faith is enough for me,  
But men must *know*—must watch the Light that plays  
Under and over all things like a sea.  
I read His ways

In every bird that sings,  
In every tangled branch of budding twig,—  
For surely God is God of little things  
As well as big.

The cold clear light men lay  
On things like these is more than ours ; but then,  
Though we grope darkly, we can find the way  
As well as men.

God knows we cannot bring  
Such light as yours to teach us what is true,  
And, knowing this, makes faith an easier thing  
For us than you.

And if we reach one end,  
If we with all our searching find out Him,  
To fight about the road—and with my friend—  
Were idle whim.

But should earth's wisest showing  
End not in this, where all true wisdom must,  
I leave it ; it is not of heaven's bestowing,  
And I can trust.

*A NOTE OF CONDOLENCE.*

YOUR dead friend held no settled creed,  
You tell me, and "within your heart  
The thought still lies—a poisoned seed,  
That will not part."

Your friend was mine as well; well known,  
Well loved in memory yet; be strong!  
The poisoned seed is all your own—  
You do him wrong.

His mind was not the facile clay  
That, heedless of all fault or flaw,  
Accepts the impress of the day  
As final law.

From clearer heights he watched the needs  
Of ages, rather than of days,  
And saw creeds superseding creeds  
In endless maze.

Too just a man in such a case,  
To claim that he had found a plan  
To fit all future time and place !  
And every man !

He could no longer deem divine  
Those petty compacts that compel  
Men's thoughts within a given line  
On threat of hell.

Where one would close the door on doubt,  
Another bursts the very locks  
Respectability points out  
As orthodox !

Thus two good men may cast abroad  
The seed of what seems rival growth,  
Yet each be working for the God  
That sent them both.

We see too short a way, my friend,  
To give us title to impose  
Our special vision, and offend  
The sight of those

Who boast like us both eyes and light ;  
Our daily path is clear and plain :  
To fix what lies beyond his sight  
Man strives in vain.

Turn how he will, life's limit mocks  
His power to pierce the hidden sphere,  
Cooped in his little clay-built box  
Of "now" and "here."

Besides, what gain to me or you—  
What guarantee in all the fight  
That from the hundred creeds held true  
We choose the right ?

Were it not better each to give  
The greater issues of his life  
In trust to God alone, and live  
Outside the strife ?

So chose your friend the path he trod,  
Unmoved by either clique or clan—  
Abiding in that fear of God  
Which fears no man.

But he was great, and wise, and good ;  
    Think of the untold crowds by whom  
These things are hardly understood,  
    And of their doom !

The unlearned thousands of the world,  
    What fate to these would you accord ?  
Shall these without a thought be hurled  
    All overboard ?

The crew that mans this ship of earth—  
    The vast, but little tutored host,  
That work their passage from their birth—  
    Shall these be lost ?

Believe me, there is many a road  
    To church and priest alike unknown,  
Whereby the ever blessed God  
    Brings home His own.



## *THE BISHOP EXHORTETH THE SICK IN HOSPITAL.*

(THE SEMI-DELIRIOUS ONE REPLIETH.)

"Audivit Pharisaum cogitantem."—AUG. Serm. 99.

OH saintly soul-salver, I know you well !  
    You're a gospel prophecy come to light,  
The sign and the wonder the Scriptures foretell  
When Christianity's husk and shell  
    Will threaten its heart like a blight.

The day of false prophets who show the road,  
    In a world deceiving and being deceived,  
When the truth shall be trampled and overtrud,  
When Mammon shall sit in the temple of God,  
    And his lie will be believed.

Nay, keep your temper, and hear me out—  
    A word for a word, it is but fair-play—  
Since I've heard with attention most devout  
Your censure of me,—too true, no doubt,—  
    You must hear what I have to say.

If you're only amused there is something gained,  
And a debt is paid you have honestly earned ;  
For think of the times you have entertained  
Whole churchfuls of people who never complained,  
But suffered you unconcerned.

To me you were better, you're as good as a play  
When the temper is up and the lungs are loud,  
And the bag-fox sinner is out and away,  
To be worried once more in the face of day  
Before an admiring crowd.

But to fight an abstraction is no great game  
Compared to a sinner in concrete fact ;  
So I freely forgive the professional flame,  
And the roughness of tongue with which you blame,  
Though myself am the sinner attacked.

A sinner, alas, I allow ; but then  
Wherever 'tis made is the charge not true ?  
Are there any exceptions ? Say one in ten ?  
No ! this is the jacket which fits all men,  
Then pray, sir, what are you ?

Are you more than a man, and have you no share  
In the every-day dangers besetting us all ?  
Will you open your Bible and show me where  
Your warrant is found for the judge's chair,  
And exemption from the Fall ?

Wherein is the likeness to Christ, I pray,  
In an act like this, in which you track  
A sick fellow-wayfarer's suffering clay,  
Till you've hunted him down, and brought him to bay,  
Helpless, and on his back ?

And talk of his sins to the man you have tracked—  
Of whose prior existence you hardly knew  
Do the sinner's misfortunes absolve your act  
Or think you, because my body is racked,  
My soul is disabled too ?

In health as in sickness my sins I avow,  
And pray for their pardon while flesh endures :  
They are more, far more, than enough, I trow ;  
But I shall not add to their number now  
By encouraging you in yours.

Oh I wrong you not ! I know your place—

You're a worldling doing the work of a saint ;  
But in me you have wholly mistaken your case :  
You must go elsewhere with your holy grimace  
And your sepulchre coat of paint.

The Church as a part of the world you know :

It's a business you have at your fingers' ends—  
Its inward machinery outward show,  
How the funds are raised, and the side-winds blow,  
And the general policy tends.

Its earthly competitors, how they are led—

To interests like these you are more than awake ;  
In these you have work for your worldly head ;  
But here, as you sit by a sick man's bed,  
You are simply a huge mistake.

I acknowledge your gifts, and your practical mind,—

Your eloquence too in its proper field ;  
But the still small voice, and the words that bind,  
With Christ's own fetters, a man to his kind,  
To you is a secret sealed.

Though you speak with the tongue of angels and man,  
Work wonders, move mountains, give all to the poor,  
There's a grace you want, shrinks them all to a span :  
Believe it or not, there's a flaw in your plan—  
Foundations are insecure.

But who shall convince my Lord Bishop of sin ?  
What has he to repent of, or confess ?  
He's already attained— there is nothing to win ;  
To the Church he is spotless without and within,  
And all men acquiesce.

You are angry? ah, well, as you go through the street,  
Though your brow is black, and your lip is curled,  
There is plenty to solace you,—words more sweet ;  
'Twill be Rabbi ! and Rabbi ! from all you meet,—  
You are back to your Church in the world.



*SOUL SUSTENANCE.*

SEEK peace where you can find it. 'Tis not here,  
Amid the petty worries that beset  
Man's higher will, drowned in the daily fret  
Of small anxieties that peep and peer,  
And wear men's lives away from year to year.  
Our boasted civilisation spreads a net,  
'Twere better man should labour to forget  
If he would keep his soul's high vision clear.

Look there ! outside the rock-bound harbour bar,  
And watch the plunging breakers headlong hurled !  
White-crested horseman of the bloodless war,  
Declared from the foundation of the world !  
In Nature's glee the soul forgets her load,—  
The fountains of refreshment dwell with God.

MOUNT EDGCUMBE.

## TWO SERMONS.

"The church bell, which elsewhere calls people together to worship God, calls them together in Scotland to listen to a *preachment*."—ISAAC TAYLOR.

## No I.

YOU take too much upon you, friend ;  
You speak in far too firm a tone  
Of others' sins, for one who has  
A human nature of his own.

I highly prize your moral worth,  
Your sterling virtues pure and strong ;  
But whether these should give you ground  
To frown upon the weak and wrong

I question much. Bethink yourself,—  
You still are human after all,  
And therefore should not quite forget  
You too are liable to fall.

You need not preach a Christian creed  
With any hope men's souls to win,  
If in your heart you do not feel  
Some sense of fellowship in sin.

And even although the bulk of men  
Were poor and weak where you are strong,  
You'd better try to lead them right  
Than scold them when you deem them wrong.

You hurt your office and your power  
By taking ground so high as this ;  
The world will not be led by such  
Hard self-sufficing righteousness.

You but provoke its criticism,  
And feed it with the very food  
That keeps it living in the wrong,  
Though you may think you're doing good.

The truths you teach may be the best,  
And yet the teaching fail in merit ;  
Christ's truth itself may yet be taught  
With something of the devil's spirit.

## No. II.

(*Ancien régime*; but not dead yet.)

HIS text was one that gave him room  
To fume, and fulminate, and make  
The house of God a house of gloom,—  
A text to make the sinner quake.  
Corruption was the theme of it,  
And Hell the lurid gleam of it.

Mankind, he preached, were poisoned through ;  
Corrupt without, corrupt within,  
Black was the universal hue,—  
“ In short,” said he, “ the rock of sin  
On every side has wrecked you all,  
Moral and intellectual.”

With Calvinistic pessimism  
He found all hopeful creeds unfit,  
And plucked, according to his schism,  
The sourest plums from Bible writ,  
And tried to palm them off on us,  
With solemn croak cacophonous.

And as he argued—pulpit-perched—  
A gracious God indorsed his views,  
I turned my eyes away, and searched  
For children's faces in the pews.  
I felt I must not look at him  
For fear I threw the book at him.

He proved each man from head to foot  
A mass of putrefying sore,  
Thoughts festering in a heart of soot,  
Sin oozing out at every pore.  
The body and the soul of us  
The Devil had the whole of us.

He loved his theme, 'twas clear enough,  
For all the rottenness and dirt  
And rank defilement of the stuff,—  
One felt he had the thing at heart ;  
He hugged it so, and handled it,  
And dressed it up, and dandled it.

Then plunging past the gates of death,  
He mixed the sinner's awful cup,  
Till hot and red he stopt for breath,  
And moped the perspiration up.  
If terror could re-fashion us,  
He did not spare the lash on us.

I saw him when the task was done,  
His gown and morals packed away,  
His deep self-satisfaction won,  
His reeking supper on the tray ;  
And looking through the smoke of it,  
'Twas then I saw the joke of it.

The pious wrath, the wordy run,  
From every mouth too glibly poured,  
Which makes us feel that we have done  
Some special service for the Lord,—  
Oh the deceiving seed of it !  
The tongue without the deed of it !

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### *LONDON.*

" Gentlemen, you may make light of this danger now ; but the danger of centralisation is one of the greatest dangers we have to fear in this country."—LORD ROSEBURY.

**L**ONDON, thou mightiest mass alive !  
Great human forge ! the busiest hive  
Of work beneath the sun done,  
What power beneath thy daily load,  
Short of the very arm of God,  
Could keep thee moving, London ?

Men try to compass thee with speech,  
To prove with figures past their reach  
    What's never been by man done.  
Statistics only more involve  
The miracle no man can solve,  
    The throbbing world of London !

From east and west, from north and south,  
The earth is taxed to fill thy mouth,  
    With work in every zone done.  
The myriad sails beside thee furled  
Have scoured the seas of all the world  
    To fill thy maw, O London ?

What endless labour here finds room,  
From work within the garret's gloom  
    To work upon the throne done.  
Pauper and prince, and priest and cheat,  
Jostling each other in the street,  
    All find their work in London.

A motley world, of every race,  
Of every feature, form, and face,  
    Black, white, and swarthy sun-dun.  
All sorts, conditions, ranks, degrees,  
Turks, Negroes, Tartars, Japanese,  
    They're all at home in London !

The bishop rolls along the street,  
Lazarus is lying at his feet—  
    Salvation for each one done,  
Though still the nation's boasted creed,  
'Tis cherished more in word than deed  
    In many parts of London.

What woe beneath the buzz and hum!  
For here all wretched creatures come  
    That faith and hope abandon.  
Misfortune's offspring, huddled, hurled,  
The broken wreckage of the world,  
    Seeks harbour here in London.

And every nation pours its throng,  
Its cast-off crowd of sin and wrong,  
    With hundreds that have none done.  
For many a kind heart shares the flight  
Of shame that shudders at the light,  
    And hides its head in London.

And gentle folks, once well-to-do,  
Who never dreamt, and never knew,  
    That revenue could run done,—  
Brought up to everything but work,  
Half-housed! half-starved! half-mad! they lurk  
    By thousands here in London.

Ah ! well for you, who only know  
The sunny street, the outward show,  
    The favour and the fun done.  
If you could see the hidden tears,  
And hear the sighs God only hears,  
    Your hearts would sink in London.

To every city under heaven,  
To every living thing is given  
    Allotted time to run done.  
Then, earth to earth must pass away,  
As Babylon did, and Nineveh,—  
    What of the night, O London ?

Think, London, of that day ahead !  
Thy noise for ever stricken dead,  
    And all thy labour undone ;  
When foul birds flit from tomb to tomb  
For garbage in the ghastly gloom—  
    The swamp, that once was London !



## HONOURS.

To H. A. B.

HE was thrown from his horse just a fortnight ago,  
Fractured his skull, and was killed on the spot ;  
And already, before the grass can grow  
On the new-made grave, he is quite forgot.

So busy a man, too, in life's affray,  
With his time filled up to the hour and the minute ;  
There was hardly a thing in a public way  
But in some form or other his finger was in it.

As borough town councillor taking the lead,  
If a bailie was wanted he stopped the gap ;  
Now a new-made magistrate reigns in his stead,  
And his relict "receives" in her widow's cap.

Out of common respect for his councillorhood,  
They might surely have waited a month, good Lord !  
Ere his vacant appointments were all made good,  
And his place was filled at the council board.

Is there never a world where the "unpaid" soul,  
Who gives labour for nothing, and that without stint,  
Receives something more for his place on life's *role*  
Than the blessing of seeing his name in print?

## L'ENVOY.

You, friend, at your easel, and I at my rhyme,  
We must shun that pitfall at any cost;  
Popularity's bait is the devil's birdlime,  
Where the object is gained and the man is lost.  
had rather your canvas were finally furled,  
My verse in the fire there crumpled and curled,  
Than that either should trim to the tune of the world.

---

## CREEDS.

"They have cast fire into Thy sanctuary."

THE truths that everybody sees,  
Dear friend, let's rather think on these  
Than dwell upon the differences.

Why should religion run to seed  
Upon the borders of a creed  
On which no two men are agreed.

When there's so much of common land  
Where honest men can take a stand,  
And shake each other by the hand,—

A blessed land of pastures green  
And quiet waters, where unseen  
The soul can rest herself between

The struggles of life's battle-storm,  
And hide her from the earthly worm  
Of her distresses multiform :—

A land—earth's heritage—that lies  
In all men's hearts, in all men's eyes,  
An ever-smiling paradise ?

Why labour so to ferret out  
Those arguments that writhe about,  
And nourish only strife and doubt ?

Let's rather with a wise decision  
Stamp out the points that breed division,  
And bring God's truth into derision.

They live but in the truth's disguise ;  
They have no savour of the skies,  
And feed no soul-necessities.

The points on which we disagree  
Are but the fruits of that old tree  
That poisoned our humanity,—

Diseases of an earthly state;  
If we can only trust and wait,  
We'll lay them down at heaven's gate.

Why then insist upon them here,  
Till all that honest men hold dear  
Becomes the butt of sceptic sneer ?

We are not blameless: who can tell  
How much this sin of ours may swell  
The numbers of the infidel ?

A sin not less the full of shame  
That it affects a holy flame,  
And preaches in Religion's name.

Alas ! alas ! the early day  
Ere truth waxed wise enough to stray  
From her divine simplicity ;

When men would say to one another,  
Where Christians first were wont to gather :  
"Behold them ! how they love each other."

If the reverse, men now should take  
For truth, although his heart should break,  
What answer could the Christian make ?

'Mid all this broken unity,  
This devil's opportunity  
Of modern mock community,

This creed-idolatry, this thrall  
That nourishes an endless brawl,  
And lives on true Religion's fall,—

Let's strike it out, it cannot be :  
But there is somewhere, could we see,  
A broader base of unity,—

Some simpler test of good and true :  
No subtlety that looks askew,  
And changes with the point of view,—

A creed that does not strive or cry,  
Nor vaunt its own sufficiency  
By giving all dissent the lie ;

That breeds no spirit rank and rife  
Full fed upon those seeds of strife,  
That poison all its highest life ;

That urges not the greatest good  
Of greatest numbers, as it should ;  
But teaches rather to exclude,

And lays upon the soul a load  
Unbearable : a human code  
That half obscures the truth of God,

With systems crossed and counter-crossed,  
Where philosophic labours lost  
Feed only reason's fools at most.

But more, if it were understood,  
The question is not " If we should ? "  
We could not do it if we would ;—

We could not shape a standard creed  
To serve all time and every need,  
And be to all the truth indeed.

For truth confined to mortal pages,  
Conforming still to different gauges,  
Is different truth in different ages.

Judge by ourselves, dear friend, and say,  
Are the beliefs of life's young May  
The same with those we hold to-day ?

Not so, alas ! they faint and fade,  
Or live in memory to upbraid  
For all the foolish vows we made.

Yet think not, friend, your creeds among,  
That those fond faiths when we were young  
Are worthless things because unsung

To psalms on Sundays, or because  
Your full-grown code of bloodless laws  
Has gained a longer-faced applause.

Take care, in your creed-righteousness,  
Your head's best wisdom has not less  
Of God than your heart's foolishness.

They were not lost, those early years,  
Ere faith had drawn on wisdom's fears,—  
I see them yet through half-shed tears.

But mark, I do not justify  
Those fervent faiths of youth—not I ;  
It is but right that they should die.

But, then, should he whose creed is made  
Of colours that can change and fade  
To something different each decade—

Should he who cannot make a rule  
To guide himself be yet the fool  
Who hopes to put the world to school ?

No, no, dear friend ; let others seek  
A short-lived fame amongst the weak  
Who live to hear each other speak

In measured phrases smooth and bland,  
That prove conclusions out of hand  
On points fools only understand.

But we—if we must build a creed—  
Let's base our faith on what we need,  
And not on niceties that feed

The spirit's lust with earthly meat  
Of doctrines clipt all trim and neat,  
In which to glass our own conceit,

And give to some particular view  
Applause so racked beyond its due,  
Its very truth is hardly true.

We need not look so far abroad  
For ground select and seldom trod  
To caper in the sight of God.

All that the wisest man can teach,  
Thou he were gifted with the speech  
Of angels, lies not out of reach

Of him who seeks the better part  
In the clear light and simple art  
God gives unto an upright heart.

---

“CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN.”

OFT have I seen, in midmost heart of June,  
Day breaking in a rough and rugged morning,  
Black thunder-clouds, that gave the world a warning  
Of lightnings that would leap upon it soon.  
And then, anon, the winds fell down at noon,  
The clouds dispersed, the sun, all danger scorning,  
Sank in the peaceful west, the hills adorning,  
And through a breathless twilight rose the moon !

Not in the storm, O Lord ! or fire, or thunder,  
Dost thou bring home to man his final choice.  
These are but screens of the eternal wonder  
That stand between us and Thy holier voice.  
When Thy strong Sun has drawn these veils asunder,  
Men hold their souls in patience, and rejoice.

BAY OF NAPOULE.

---

*TIME AND ETERNITY.*

WHAT matters it to us, who are immortal,  
Which side o' the grave we stand on, when we  
know  
That what the world calls death is but the portal  
Leading to life again ? 'Tis but to go  
Across a gurgling river in the dark,  
Hanging on God ; and but a moment so,  
Till we are over, where we disembark  
And enter life afresh. 'Tis basely wrong  
We should so meanly understrike the mark  
As measure life by years ; and all along  
Busy ourselves, arranging little schemes  
That death will dash to pieces, when we might  
Be building, far above these earthly dreams,  
Houses that stand for ever in God's light.

*WORK.*

## I.

"In the sweat of thy face," &c.

**B**LEST work! if ever thou wert curse of God,  
What must His blessing be? Drier of tears,  
Man's surest comforter when his abode  
Is clothed about with sorrow and soul-fears,  
When clouds and darkness gather on the road  
Till all his land of promise disappears,  
And he sees nothing in the coming years  
But aimless wandering with a heavy load.  
He will not hear thy wiser counsellings  
Till all earth's counsel fails: then thou art known,—  
An angel, then, with healing on thy wings,  
Bringing from heaven a peace that is thine own.  
Before thy lesser cross his fears are dumb,—  
\* He sings and works whatever fate may come.

## WORK.

## II.

"If any man will *do* . . . he shall *know*."—JOHN vii. 17.

THOU school of life, and only education  
Worth the having. All that is elsewhere taught  
Is but the *dilettante* fringe of thought:  
Thou art the centre of its inspiration.  
Wherever thou with holiness art sought,  
Men find in thee an onward revelation  
Clearing the way. Before thy busy hands  
Error—and error's friend, confusion—flies.  
And slowly lifting melancholy eyes,  
Through half-shed tears, arrested Sorrow stands  
And smiles in thy sweet face: oh, who can tell  
The deep unspoken worship thou hast brought;  
Praise, prayer, and duty sweetly interwrought:  
The idler is the only infidel!

*A POPULAR CHARACTER.*

**A** CLEVER fellow, wide awake,  
The world allows that he can take  
Measure of most things—no mistake !

Don't humbug him with moral prose ;  
Without the "*wherewithal*" it goes  
For next to nothing. Oh, he knows !

He knows the world and all its ways ;  
Your "*theory*" deserves all praise—  
"A pity that it never pays !"

Oh yes, he knows, sees through and through it,  
Admits you're right—the way you view it,  
He would advise you to pursue it.

But he, you see, must gain his end,  
Although, in gaining, he offend  
Or even sacrifice a friend.

There is not any one condition  
He will not swallow for position,  
And gratify a weak ambition.

No ditch too dirty or too deep ;  
No means too humble, road too steep :  
For where he cannot walk he'll creep.

Most courteous, too ; where'er he can,  
Becomes all things to every man—  
If it will only help his plan.

Most affable, but all a trick ;  
Where he has power he'll bite and kick, —  
Where he has not he'll cringe and lick.

And yet this wretched creeping creature  
Measures universal nature  
By the height of his own stature,

And thinks, because he waits the tide  
For filthy scraps, all men beside  
Are similarly occupied.

With those who not for golden shower  
Will stoop to dodge and serve the hour, —  
He puts it down to want of power :

And yet, a man of means and place—  
A moral man, a man of grace—  
One reads it in the world's face !

Oh, friend, you are a great success—  
A man whom fortune seems to bless ;  
But just allow me to confess,

If you could have a verdict found  
That all the world believed you sound :  
Look ! there's the door—get out, you hound !

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### *THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.*

IT was in the dreary winter, when the year is grey  
and old,  
That I sat beside my sorrow, in the darkness, lone and  
cold,—  
With my soul alone and cold.

The cruel grief that pierced me through, oh, ask me  
not to tell,  
But let me hold it in my heart, hiding it where it fell,—  
Unspoken where it fell.

Down relentless nights of darkness, from the golden heights of youth,

Black sorrow hunted me, with silent foot and steady mouth,—

Slow foot and steady mouth.

And gazing down the darkness of my life with maddening pain,

I saw strange idiot fingers clutching upward at my brain,—

Crawling upwards at my brain.

And I heard the whispered word come up the dreary realms of sadness,

The unintelligible sound that hinted coming madness,—

The awful hint of coming madness.

I smote the heavens with a cry, the last cry of my woe;  
Black, utter silence only frowned into the dark below,—

Dark above and dark below.

So at last I lay me down, and, whispering to my sorrow,  
said—

“ We shall seek the blessed peace that dwells beside  
the quiet dead,—

Seek oblivion with the dead.”

While I spoke a light broke o'er me, with my soul's  
deliverance,—

When the worst comes God comes with it ; and I fell  
into a trance,—

A strangely conscious trance.

I bethought me that some cataleptic seizure it must  
prove,

For though I felt, and saw, and heard, I could not  
speak nor move,—

Not a finger could I move.

There I lay without heart motion and without a  
conscious breath,

As if struck to instant marble in the rigid grip of  
death,—

In the stony grip of death.

Trance or death ? It kept my eyes so firmly fixed  
within my head

That when they came they started back, exclaiming  
“ She is dead ! ”—

In terror, “ She is dead ! ”

heard them walk about the room, with hushed and  
noiseless tread,

And a solemn voice, with studied gloom, saying, “ The  
spark is fled,”—

“ The vital spark is fled.”

Then they stretched me out so softly, when they knew  
that I was dead;

They did not dream that all the while I heard each  
word they said,—

Every heartless word they said.

They discussed the many changes death would bring  
about the place,

And then the gossip turned upon the jewels and the lace,  
The money, and the jewels, and the lace.

Some praised my generous dealings, ready help with  
hand or head,

In the usual easy way such debts are settled with the  
dead,—

With the creditor that's dead.

Uttering words of seeming kindness, but they lied when  
I was dead;

I knew the tear was false as Hell that dropped upon  
my head,—

Dropped on my fallen head.

Then they spoke of what I speak not, words that seemed  
to taint the air,

To good or bad when death arrives the foulest birds are  
there,—

The carrion birds are there.

Then back to fulsome praise, and again before death's  
face

They could not help returning to the money and the  
lace,—

To the jewels, and the money, and the lace.

Their falseness wearied me ; I wished that they would  
veil my head,

That I might lie and smile unseen, ay, smile at what  
they said,—

Lie and smile at what they said.

But surely they were cowards thus to praise me lying  
dead :

They knew I could not answer them one word for what  
they said,—

Not one word for what they said.

They dared not praise me had I lived, in such a fulsome  
mood,

They dared not then have praised me, lest I cursed them  
where they stood,—

Yes, cursed them where they stood.

But now all passion passes ; praise or blame, heart's  
grief or mirth,

No more can reach me where I lie, at peace with all the  
earth,—

At deep peace with all the earth. .

Three days and nights I lay alone, for the living kept aloof;

I heard the winds moan in the night and the rain upon the roof,—

The pattering rain upon the roof.

I heard the old clock in the stair, ticking within the wall,

And I thought it ticked out in the dark that "God was over all."—

God-God, God-God, God was over all."

Only once a childish footstep ventured near me where I lay,

Before the household was astir, about the break of day,—  
Near the dawning of the day.

The child had doubtless been denied the chamber of the dead,

Yet here God's fearless creature lay beside me, head by head,—

Close together, head to head.

She put her hand upon my face, then wondering if she durst,

She kissed me, kissed me, kissed me, till I thought my heart would burst,—

O, God! I thought my heart would burst.

And when she left I heard my name 'twixt her sobbing  
and her sighs,

Till blessed tears came back to me, and fell from out  
my eyes,—

Fell out of my dead eyes.

At last they carried me away, with solemn pomp and  
slow,

And all the way I heard them speak in strains of forced  
woe,—

Words of hollow-sounding woe.

They did not hear the laugh of scorn, nor yet the  
ghostly tread

Of the indignant spirit walking with them at my head,—  
Close beside them at my head.

Of all the crowd were only two whose words held not  
the stain ;

These two with callous honesty discussed the price of  
grain,—

The markets and the current price of grain.

But all the rest they thought it seemly so to praise the  
dead ;

Oh, this world! it soundeth doubly hollow when the  
life hath fled,—

Strangely hollow unto one that lieth dead.

Then they cut a holy text upon the tombstone at my head ;

They could not even let alone the quiet harmless dead,—

They must blaspheme the dead.

Oh ! I felt a speechless peace come down like balm upon my brain,

When at last they turned away and left me lying in the rain,—

In the soft and silent rain.

And it fell so gently whispering, like a smile upon a frown,

That I wondered if it knew a brutal hoof had struck me down,—

That a brutal human hoof had struck me down.

But my soul is now at peace, thanking God that all is past,

That through the maddening surges I have reached the shore at last,—

The silent shore at last.

*REST.*

PASSED into peace ; you shall not vex her now,  
    Beyond the reach of all your idle breath ;  
Her aching heart is stilled, her troubled brow  
    Is smoothed beneath the silent hand of death.

Passed into peace ; all that she had she gave you,  
    Poured her life's treasure through an open sluice,  
Did all she could, and all she knew to save you,  
    And in return reaped nothing but abuse.

Passed into peace ; her freedom now begins,—  
    Life's slavery is over. There she lies,  
The woman, made the scapegoat of your sins :  
    If you should shout to her she will not rise.

Passed into peace ; out of the friendless city,  
    Where you had left her, homeless and alone,  
To fight her way without one word of pity,  
    Flesh of your very flesh ! bone of your bone !

Passed into peace ! she thought the hand of death  
Was some old friend's she once had held before.  
"Ah, come at last !" she said, then, one long breath  
The broken heart, long-suffering, beat no more.

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### *GIFTS.*

**B**EWARE of gifts from men ;  
Examine them, and look them well i' the mouth,  
The caution of the proverb notwithstanding,  
Though clothed in words as balmy as the south,  
In accents of a heart with love expanding,—  
    Beware of gifts from men.

Say, would they give thee praise ?  
Take care of it ; there's poison in that cup, —  
Sweet at the first, it slowly closes up  
The source of that approval in the heart  
Which comes from God. Choose thou the holier part.  
    And leave earth's meaner ways.

Have friendship, if you must,  
But you must pay for it, and give, and give, and give ;  
There, where the carcass lies, the eagles live :  
Where it is gone, past favours are forgot,  
Till friend shall pass old friend and know him not,—  
    There is but One to trust.

Is it some higher shelf  
Of honour men would give you ? Who are they  
That give it ? Are they made of different clay,  
That you must stoop and take what they allot ?  
A higher honour no man ever got  
    Than that he gave himself.

What would they give you ? Bread ?  
Touch not a bite. The crust that you have earned  
Is holier food than this. The wise have learned  
That bread unwrought for does but little good,—  
Possesses not the virtue of that food  
    By work inherited.

“ Who then can help ? And what ?  
When you yourself are stricken in your place ? ”  
Ah then ! my Friend will come and kiss my face,  
And take my hand in his (I know him well),  
And lead me through the fields of asphodel,  
    His gift ! Thank God for that.

*MONEY'S WORTH.*

RELIGION, did you say? The man has none:  
'Tis but religion's husk—a mere convention.  
He goes to church, and there the matter's done,—  
Religion is no part of his intention.  
He looks upon it as a priest's invention—  
A mere ecclesiastical spring-gun—  
To frighten silly folks to condescension.  
He joins the Church because he hates contention:  
And, just to make his soul as safe as any,  
Takes out a policy against hell-fire:  
A shrewd investment, costing not a penny  
Either in shape of premium or duty.  
To him religion stands for nothing higher:  
The cheapness of the bargain is the beauty.



*THE MAN WITHOUT AN ENEMY.*

A LITTLE shabby shuffling devil,  
Half a coward, half a drivel,  
To whom one hardly can be civil.

A mind that every trifler leads,  
Whose thoughts, however good the seeds,  
Can never ripen into deeds.

The first that stops him in the street  
Convinces him, until he meet  
A second, who will straight defeat

The first ; and so he walks among  
Men's thoughts, till every change be rung  
Within the compass of the tongue.

A mental mush of meek concessions,  
And blotting-paper half-impressions,  
Sum up the creature's brain possessions.

His life's a sickly consultation,  
An endless, aimless alternation,  
A lukewarm hell of hesitation.

Ransack the man from top to toe,  
His whole anatomy will show  
No certainty of Yes or No.

Survey him round and round about,  
Look through him, turn him inside out,—  
There's nothing there but rags of doubt,

And even these change with the wind,—  
Not one that's strong enough to bind  
The floating lumber of his mind.

Buckets of watery locution,  
Infinitesimal dilution  
Of one weak drop of resolution.

His mind can never keep its hold  
With strength enough to make him bold  
To strike, until the iron's cold.

He stands at gaze upon life's brink,  
But dare not enter; can but shrink,  
And wonder what the world would think.

And there, amid his coward fancies,  
Whilst he is balancing his chances,  
We must leave him,—Time advances.

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### *A SONG OF THE SEA.*

IN days of old our island home  
Was but the pirate's gain ;  
From either hand come o'er the foam  
The Norman or the Dane,  
Till good Queen Bess's time ; 'twas then,  
With sailors of our own,  
Uprose a fleet, and fighting men,  
The world had never known.

Who made the Spanish despot bow  
Beneath Britannia's star ?  
'Twas the old sea-dogs of England,  
The sailor lads of England,  
The dauntless tars of England,  
That made us what we are.

The tyrant thought that every sail  
Afloat upon the main  
Should dip her flag and pay blackmail  
To Philip, King of Spain.  
But Drake and Hawkins knew their ground,  
And well they laid their baits :  
They let his fleet pass Plymouth Sound,  
And caught him in the Straits.

Who raked the Armada fore and aft  
A league from Calais Bar ?  
'Twas the old sea-dogs of England,  
The sailor lads of England,  
The dauntless lars of England,  
That made us what we are

When Dutch Van Tromp, with all his crew—  
A broom at his mast-head—  
Swore he could sweep our Channel through,  
And that his foe had fled ;  
Outspake great Blake, our Admiral,—  
“ We'll give that broom,” said he,  
“ To Davy Jones, to sweep the stones  
At the bottom of the sea.”

Who smote the Dutchman in the Downs,  
And chased him home afar?  
'Twas the old sea-dogs of England,  
The sailor lads of England,  
The dauntless tars of England,  
That made us what we are.

Then grudge no means to fix more sure  
These anchors of our hope,  
The men who wield, for rich and poor,  
The tiller and the rope.  
If British bounds must still contain  
A people bold and free,  
Our path is plain, we must retain  
The sceptre of the sea.

Let not the record be forgot,  
Nor drowned in party jar,  
'Twas the old sea-dogs of England,  
The sailor lads of England,  
The dauntless tars of England,  
That made us what we are.

*PROVE ALL THINGS.*

YOU talk of soul, good sir, but where's the proof ?  
The proof, I say, you have a soul at all ?  
Where is its visible action ? On what stuff  
Do you sustain it ? What if I should call  
Its life in question ? Body I can see,  
A mortal case that should contain a soul  
And upon which you lavish all and whole,  
Your every thought. But think how you would be  
If fleshy life, with all its hungry roll  
Of wants, were struck away. No more again  
To eat, or drink, or sleep : the remnant then,  
Is't not grotesquely inconceivable ?  
Can you imagine life of these bereft ?  
Your body gone, pray, what the devil's left ?



*SNOWDROPS IN A STORM.*

POOR broken flower, in this vile tempest whirled,  
What prompteth thee to such untimely birth,  
To be so soon down-trodden in the earth ?  
Before thy pearly petals had uncurled  
The bells that ring in springtime to the world,  
Thou wouldest have brought us welcome, and with  
mirth  
Led all our thoughts away from winter's dearth,  
Had fate but left thy beauty unimperilled.

In this sad world thine is a common fate,  
A world in which the gentlest heart fares worst,  
Borne down by the intolerable weight  
Of kindness unregarded, or accurst,  
Its labour spurned ; its love disconsolate  
As thine, fair flower ! the purest suffer first.



*IN MEMORIAM.*

WILD winter morn, whose dawning brings  
The whisper, "Henry Renton's dead," \*  
Oh beat not thou thy sorrowing wings  
Because a gentle soul has fled.

Though earth should groan from pole to pole  
In travail like a thing distressed,  
Far out beyond the storm his soul  
Hath entered on his quiet rest.

A rest well honoured, nobly won,  
And yet, what loss to living men—  
In all their work beneath the sun  
Thy hand shall never help again.

A death like thine hath called a truce,  
Heard round about thee many a mile,  
And men forget their daily use  
To stand beside thy grave awhile

\* A distinguished Minister of the United Presbyterian Church.

To pay that honour due to one  
Who bore the battle brunt of life,  
And ranked a second unto none  
Where conscience called him to the strife ;

Who freedom's flag hath never bowed,  
But single-handed dared to stand  
Unmoved befc're the bellowing crowd  
In Caffre or in Christian land.

Though strong within thy special sphere,  
No straitened cultus bound thee down,  
Or stained thy courage with a fear  
Of coward's caution, church's frown.

Thy latest deed—when time was brief,  
Proclaimed aloud thy higher call  
To preach a union of belief,  
Through wider charity, to all.

Great to the end, when life's last ray  
Gave notice of impending doom,  
Thy dying effort was to lay  
The laurel on a brother's tomb :

A brother fallen on the field,—\*

That valiant soldier, strong and true,  
Who hid behind his dazzling shield  
A heart his comrades only knew;

Who strove to reach the higher law,  
The central light of all the creeds,  
And struck straight out at all he saw  
That robbed true freedom of her needs,

Farewell, kind heart! thy battle's o'er,  
Thy spirit gone to Him who gave;  
'Mongst honours paid thee many more,  
We lay a song upon thy grave.

---

### *A LITTLE GIRL IN A GARDEN.*

HERE! there she bounds! a footstep light as wind,  
Unstained of earth, a daughter of the skies,  
Her floating hair with summer flowers entwined,  
The blue of summer's heaven in her eyes.

\* The late Alexander Russel, of the *Scotsman*.

Around her every movement summer girds  
A sense of sunshine as she leaps along ;  
The sweet-brier hedge is full of singing birds,  
But not more full than is her heart of song.

'Twixt summer and her soul there seems to run  
A power to feel together, and confer,  
Binding their lives more closely into one  
By language known but to the flowers and her.

The blackbird more than sings to her—it speaks ;  
The plane-tree whispers to her all it knows ;  
The secret of the rose is on her cheeks,  
And on her brow the lilies shed their snows.

Oh mystery of mysteries ! Can it be  
That this fair soul must take the common way ?  
Learn what the world learns, taste life's bitter tree,  
And reach the gates of death by slow decay ?

Oh Thou that took the children in Thine arms,  
And blessing them drew all men by the deed,  
Guide Thou her every step through life's alarms,  
And help her in her bitter hour of need.

Let some of the sweet summer of her days  
Remain with her to gladden life's last hour,  
Till passing with the sunset's dying rays  
She falls asleep in Thee, a sleeping flower.

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### *VITA UMBRATILIS.*

**H**IS men grown winter-weary close their eyes  
To give imagination stronger wing,  
Wherewith to paint a visionary spring,  
Invoking memory till pictures rise  
Of grass grown greener, flowers, and balmy skies—  
Beside the brook they hear the lintwhite sing,  
And in the stillness, wild bees murmuring,  
Till winter days are lost in spring's disguise.

So in the widowed winter of his days  
The solitary mourner shuts his door,  
Where, brooding on the visionary store,  
Lost forms and faces pass beneath the rays  
Of light and love that cheered the gladsome ways  
Of what was once his summer ; his no more.

## EUPHROSYNE.

BECAUSE the gods have so apparell'd thee,  
Spirit of loveliness and light !  
Sweet-lipped, blue-eyed, and golden-curled thee  
In sudden beauty, dazzling mortal sight ;  
Tell me, fine spirit—Is it right  
That thou, all heedless of another's pain,  
Shouldst bound through life, a crystal river,  
Leaping onwards to the main—  
Leaping, laughing ever ;  
Fast binding with a golden-linked thrall  
The charmed hearts and eyes of all ?  
I charge thee, answer me, fine sprite :  
Say—Is it right ?

Letting thy level glances fall  
With sudden strength electrical ;  
Launching thy winged smile with arrowy power  
Through finest thrills of glittering laughter-shower,  
A slanting sunbeam through the summer rain,  
Piercing the blood and brain ;  
I charge thee stand and answer, thing of light :  
Say—Is it right ?

Dost thou not know  
That oftentimes unconscious laughter flings  
Her silver fingers o'er the hidden strings,  
Or waketh with the rustle of her wings  
A silent sleeping woe ?

Hast thou not heard  
That noblest souls, beyond a thought of guile,  
Pierced by the golden-shafted smile  
That heedless beauty gave,

Have maddened from the bridle of control  
Through dark disaster, with the burning coal  
Of a devouring sorrow in their soul  
Chasing them to the grave ?

Laugh I laugh again, sweet spirit, laugh :  
I would not have thee sorrowful. But, oh !  
Remember thou that in this world below,  
Hid in the cup of life that thou must quaff,  
Are bitter drops of woe,—  
That, when the dark day cometh, thou  
With trusting heart and quiet uplift brow,  
Dauntless and pure as now,  
Must take thy sister Sorrow by the hand ;  
And she will teach thee, in her holy fears,  
Earth's dearest joys, like heavenly rainbows, stand  
Upon a bridge of tears.

*COMPENSATION.*

## I.

THEY took him from his fellows—marked him out  
For kingdom ; on a nation's worship set  
His glittering throne, and crowned him with a shout.  
But yet, alas ; but yet,

God was not mocked. The world could not disarm  
The silent enemy within the breast,  
That undermining of the unseen worm,—  
The worm that will not rest.

## II.

They cast him out in anger ; called him mad,  
Scorned him, and made his tender heart a whet  
To sharpen idle wit. Oh it was sad.

But yet, thank heaven ! but yet,

He was not friendless, for where'er he trod,  
Warm words fell round him in sweet summer showers,  
Down from the starry silences of God,  
Up from the lips of flowers.

*THE GLOWWORM.*

BY night a diamond in the grass,  
Its very light obscures its form ;  
When day's effulgence comes, alas !  
What is it but a worm ?

And what art thou on wings of light  
Threading with fire the darkness lonely ?  
A dazzling mystery by night !—  
By day an insect only !

And thou, fair moon, that rul'st on high,  
When night's black curtains all are drawn,  
What seemest thou in sunlit sky ?  
An empty spectre, wan !

'Tis thus the poet's thought is known  
By all who feel the mystic thrall,—  
Read me by light that is mine own,  
Or read me not at all.

*WHERE TWEED FLOWS DOWN.*

WHERE Tweed flows down by Cadonlee,  
And slowly seeks a deepening bed,  
I stand alone, a blighted tree,

From me no more, as all men see,  
Shall bud go forth, or leaf be shed,  
Where Tweed flows down by Cadonlee.

Since that wild night of storm, when she  
From all her happy kindred fled,  
I stand alone, a blighted tree.

Deep in the night she came to me,  
Hands clenched above her fallen head,  
Where Tweed flows down by Cadonlee.

And holding still the fatal key  
Of that grim secret, dark and dread,  
I stand alone, a blighted tree.

Before the black pool held its dead,  
I heard the last wild word she said!—  
I stand alone, a blighted tree,  
Where Tweed flows down by Cadonlee.

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### *CARLYLE.*

AFTER READING HIS POSTHUMOUS REMINISCENCES.

Is this the ripened utterance of the Sage?  
The voice made holier, coming from the sod,  
Of him we almost deemed a demigod.  
The Poet and the Prophet of his age,  
Could this great soul find room upon his page  
For all the petty venom of the road?  
Uphoarding the unholy heritage  
Till he himself was safe in death's abode?

Oh! let us prove these shafts that pierce and sting  
From some crazed loophole of his brain were shot,  
Blind arrows from the irresponsible string  
Of some wild marksman, mad, and knew it not.  
Let death condone the errors of a king—  
Lay them beside his bones, and let them be forgot.

*AT DARWIN'S GRAVE.*

(WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 26th APRIL, 1882.)

NOT many years ago, the popular shout  
Was "Atheist!" and critics, well at ease,  
With such a godly-seeming world to please,  
Still found in all he wrote the dreaded "Doubt."  
A day, when every little pulpit spout  
Spat venom at our English Socrates :  
He heard them as one hears the wind i' the trees,  
And turned to work his Revelation out.

And now, the self-same world, true to its laws,  
Brings to his grave its tinsel and its strife,  
To blur a blameless name with rank applause,  
And make his death less lovely than his life :  
He should have sanctified earth's common sod,  
This quiet working worshipper of God.

*TO ANDREW LANG.*

(ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ENROLMENT AS A  
FREEMAN OF THE BURGH OF SELKIRK.)

DEEM not our roll of honour aught the less  
Because no learned laurel it doth bear :  
Prince's and politician's names are there,  
But these, beside the poet's power to bless,  
Are names we hardly know that we possess.

'Tis not with these that we would have you share  
The honour Scott was not too proud to wear,  
In all his greatness, sweetness, nobleness !

'Tis as a poet, then, we claim thee here,  
And bid thee welcome with thy sheaves returning,  
Gathered from many a field, both far and near.  
On plains of Troy, or Border hills sojourning,  
Wherever led, may thee the Muses cheer,  
And keep within thy heart the home lamp burning.

*BROKEN CISTERNS.*

If thou art honest, do not seek repose  
Upon the world's approval. Do not stir  
To gain her smile. She only flatters those  
Who stoop to flatter her.

The wanton mistress of a godless race,  
Whose love is lies, whose heart is dead and cold,  
Whose slippery favour and whose foul embrace  
Is daily bought and sold.

If thou art honest, heed not thou her blame;  
But let her grind her teeth, and foam, and shriek;  
Her power to bless or curse an honest name  
On either side is weak.

Yet strong enough to be a deadly snare  
To him who fears her hate, loves her applause,  
And waits upon her judgments: oh beware,  
And trust not thou her laws.

If thou art honest, then thou hast a law  
That is thine own ; listen to that alone.  
Hold thou the world's opinion at a straw,  
And scathelessly pass on.

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## TO THE REV. ROBERT BORLAND.

MINISTER OF YARROW,

Author of "Yarrow : Its Poets and Poetry."

YARROW ! dear Scotland's Helicon,  
There's music in the name of it.  
Was ever stream more widely known ?  
Had ever stream the fame of it :

A treasure-house of old romance,  
The glamour and the gleam of it,  
Is Yarrow's by inheritance,  
In every pool and stream of it,

Till "Yarrow" has become a word  
That, in the simple ring of it,  
Awakens in the heart a chord  
That throbs through every string of it.

Whence is this hidden power derived?  
What secret feeds the flame of it?  
That all the Muses have connived  
To guard the sacred claim of it.

Those grand old "makers," would their names  
Were written in the roll of it!  
Though lost to earth, their deathless claims  
Still live within the soul of it.

And yet, not sung by these alone,  
Beneath the potent spell of it,  
Each poet seems to find his own,  
With something new to tell of it.

Our much loved Scott, great Wordsworth's lyre,  
The Ettrick Shepherd's lays of it,—  
Could river find a sweeter choir  
To sing the bonny braes of it?

Dear Borland, may your Yarrow lays  
Bring peace, without alloy in it:  
Yours is a dearer thing than praise,—  
Love's labour, and the joy of it.

## *RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

IT is an easy thing to side with those,  
In politics, religion, anything,  
Whose inconsiderate opinion throws  
Their faith to fierce extreme. Or quarrelling  
With such unreasoning madness, rashly bring  
Your forces to an argument that grows  
To equal discord on the opposite string :  
But to remain self-centred, and to cling  
To one's own conscience, and uphold the right  
'Gainst friends and foes alike ; to take a stand  
And be suspected upon every hand,  
Unloved, forsaken ; yet in hell's despite  
To strike for truth. Though heaven should pass away,  
This is the man of God, the world's true stay.



*PARTING WORDS.*

IN that last bed beneath the sky,  
Where earth's outworn and wearied guest  
Finds peace at length and quiet rest ;  
If you should come to where I lie,  
Remembering that you gave increase  
To loneliness and misery,  
Waste not on me a single sigh,—  
I have forgiven you, go in peace.

But yet, forget not those glad years,  
Before the cheerless shadow fell,  
Which brought with it our sad " Farewell,"  
And taught my feet the way of tears.  
God grant it yet may be our lot  
To live again our happier past  
In that new country, far and vast,  
Where heaven may heal what earth could not.

Later Poems.





## *THE RELIQUARY.*

I SHUT them away in a box,  
Where nobody else can see,  
And which nobody ever unlocks  
But me.

It is night, and the birds have flown,  
It is quiet as quiet can be,  
But there's one left singing alone  
With me.

I am humming the old sweet songs,  
As I pick out the little spring key  
Which opens the box that belongs  
To me.

And I spread out my treasures each one,  
They're of no great value maybe,  
But as dear as the light of the sun  
To me.

There's a photo, a carte de visite,  
With a framing of filigree,  
And with eyes than all others more sweet  
For me.

And then there are letters, a few,  
All bearing the monogram B. ;  
They are old ones, but evermore new  
To me.

If a tear from a heart's love load  
Should fall on them, thinking of thee,  
Well, nobody knows it but God  
And me.

There are plenty of curious folks,  
It's a curious world you see,  
But there's nobody opens that box  
But me.



### *THE AGNOSTIC.*

SECOND Daniel, if you please,  
Interpreter of dreams perverse,  
A prophet, who can read with ease  
    The riddle of the universe ;  
He casts our old beliefs aside,  
    The figments of a darker age,  
And laughs at every other guide  
    Save Science's enlightened page,  
As he looks down on us from the top story  
Of his superior observatory.

For what are creeds howe'er devout,  
    Since Science now has cleared the tables,  
And demonstrates beyond a doubt  
    That all our creeds are based on fables ?  
Why talk of God ? he says. The word  
    Is not for Science ; even if he

Adopts a fashion so absurd  
He writes it with a little g.  
No room for creeds or gods in the top story  
Of the Agnostic's new observatory.

Man claims Free-will ! he dreams away  
Till for reality he takes it,  
Forgetting that his bit of clay  
Is only what the potter makes it.  
He talks of soul, and stands in awe  
Of some great power that can prevent  
The working out of natural law  
And force of our environment.  
There is no need of souls in the top story  
Of our new, up-to-date observatory.

Man falls in love ; 'tis earth's decree ;  
He's in Elysium he supposes ;  
He does not know, poor fool, that he  
Is but the victim of neurosis,  
A fever furnishing supply  
To meet demand where life increases,  
Dame nature's little trick whereby  
She rehabilitates the species :  
'Tis nothing more when seen from the top story  
Of this immaculate observatory.

Strange that a school so wide of view,  
A gospel of such culture vaunting,  
Should find acceptance with so few :  
There must be surely something wanting.  
For still the world goes on believing,  
And loving too beneath love's load,  
And when in sorrow past relieving,  
Clings to the Fatherhood of God,  
Still gladly finding in the old, old story  
The light of a Divine Observatory.



*A DISCIPLE OF ST. FRANCIS.*

YES, we are poor, I grant you; very poor.  
But poverty, my friend, is not without  
Its compensations. Does it not ensure  
Our peace of mind against the empty rout—  
The burdens and entanglements of wealth—  
Its shows and shams? or, think you, are we made  
With all God gives us, vital strength and health,  
For nothing nobler than a dress parade?

What, after all, do we require above  
Our food and raiment? If all else should go,  
We have our thoughts beside us, and our love  
For all that's worth the loving, and we know—  
Where Thought and Love, twin sisters, never come,  
The palace is as sordid as the slum.



**TRIOLETS.****I. A STUDY OF THE NUDE.**

YOU came with nothing to the world,  
And can take nothing out.  
It matters not where first unfurled,  
You came with nothing to the world.  
Your Excellency, clothed and curled,  
And you there, in a clout,  
You came with nothing to the world,  
And can take nothing out.

**II. ON A LEVEL.**

WE'RE all the same  
When we're asleep:  
Through half life's game  
We're all the same.  
The drab, the dame,  
The Czar, the sweep,  
We're all the same  
When we're asleep.

## III. LETTING BYGONES BE BYGONES.

W<sup>i</sup>PE it up,  
 And say no more.  
 Who spilt the cup ?  
 Hush ? wipe it up.  
 We cannot sup  
 What's on the floor.  
 Wipe it up !  
 And say no more.

## IV. MERIT.

FROM first to last a man is worth,  
 And only worth, the work he does.  
 However high or low his birth,  
 From first to last a man is worth  
 His work alone. The rest is earth,  
 Mere rakkings ! riddlings ! refuse ! dross !  
 From first to last a man is worth,  
 And only worth, the work he does.

## V. THE NIGHT COMETH

SEIZE the faith within your reach,  
And heed not what lies out of it.  
Heaven is lost in idle speech :  
Seize the faith within your reach.  
There's plenty left to pose and preach  
And postulate the doubt of it :  
Seize the faith within your reach,  
And heed not what lies out of it.



*THE VOICE OF SPRING.*

OH Spring ! you've kept us waiting long,  
Your time is almost overdue ;  
Where have you been, you child of song,  
With all your flowery retinue ?  
That now from some far fairy ground  
You bring at last the welcome sound,  
Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !  
I'm hearing you.

Now that we look upon your face,  
To cold north winds we bid adieu,  
Leaving behind the wintry trace.  
All earthy shadows breaking through.  
How sweet to note the lengthening day,  
With summer coming up this way—  
Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !  
I'm hearing you.

Now all the feathered folk are here,  
Blackbird and chaffinch, mavis too ;  
The swallows flit across the mere,  
The larks are soaring up the blue,  
And everything that has a voice  
Now bids the happy world rejoice—  
Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !  
I'm hearing you.

There's Jenny singing at her tub,  
Something has touched her heart anew ;  
And Andrew gives his head a rub,  
And wonders what he'll say to Sue.  
Oh, voice of wizard, you're to blame,  
It's you that sets their hearts aflame—  
Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !  
I'm hearing you.



### *SEA SORROW.*

"There is sorrow on the sea."—JER. xlix. 23.

Of sounds that haunt the ear  
With sadness, men agree,  
Of all the songs they hear,  
The saddest is the sea.

A moaning mass of sound,  
By wind and water hurled,  
Chaunting with voice profound  
The burden of the world.

Awaking all life's fears,  
All griefs that we have borne,  
Thoughts bitter salt as tears,  
And broken hopes forlorn ;

Voices that but prolong,  
Unquenched from son to sire,  
The mystery of wrong,  
The baffled heart's desire.

Praise God, there's something more  
Speaks to the inner ear,  
A sigh from that far shore,  
The sea that brought us here.

The bitterest heart's regret,  
The worst that we bewail,  
Conceals a blessing yet,  
Where faith can lift the veil.

This song of sorrow set  
To ocean's troubled breast—  
God's voice, lest we forget  
That this is not our rest.

These voices of despair,  
The travail of the earth,  
Remind us that elsewhere  
We shall have other birth.

Far out beyond the sea !  
Where earthly troubles cease,  
And sorrow may not be,  
There lies a land of peace.

*THAT OTHER COUNTRY.*

THIS Earth of ours is no fit place for love.  
Love is a pilgrim and a stranger here,  
A homeless exile, living in a sphere  
Foreshadowed by that immemorial dove,  
Sent out across an ocean of unrest,  
A waste of wandering water, bleak and bare,  
To find a pathway through the trackless air,  
Wayworn and weary of the fruitless quest.

Oh Love, my love, if we could find release  
Beyond earth's troubled waters ! Some fair isle,  
Lapped in the sunshine of eternal peace,  
Where love might fold its weary wings awhile,  
That heavenly Avalon, which, far apart,  
Still beckons from the sky earth's hungry heart.



*ANTICIPATION.*

IN that new earth where Faith is merged in sight,  
And mortal mists have passed beyond the range,  
Where Hope is clothed in everlasting light,  
How shall we bear the bless of that great change  
When we reach home?

Those visions seen of old by holiest men,  
Those Eden dreams of earth's unsullied youth,  
We too shall see, and shall not lose again,—  
Dreams now no more, but God's eternal truth,  
When we reach home.

Our world is lovely : earth and sunny skies,  
The play of light upon the sea and shore ;  
But yet beyond earth's utmost gate there lies  
A splendour never man has seen before,  
When we reach home.

When darkening doubts that blurred the light of day,  
And stood between us and that fair, far land,  
Shall disappear, and on our onward way  
Leave nothing that we may not understand  
When we reach home.

When friend meets friend once more round that new  
hearth,  
After long years of waiting, night and day ;  
When we have laid aside these bonds of earth,  
There will be much for loving hearts to say  
When we reach home.

For all in this sad earth that gave us pain  
Shall fall away when we have crossed the river,  
And all that's best shall still with us remain,  
And all that's wrong be blotted out for ever,  
When we reach home.

To be at rest : earth's sin and sorrow gone,  
To hear at last the angelic host outpour  
The mighty anthem, heard in heaven alone,  
Of love that death can sunder never more,  
When we reach home.

“*NUNC DIMITTIS.*”

HOME I take me home, O Lord, for I am weary;  
The sky above me now is grey and cold,  
The way across the moor is bleak and dreary,  
And I too weak to wander, as of old.

The burden is too heavy for the back,  
The road too rough for all my strenuous trying,  
And all along the worn and withered track  
The flowers I used to see are dead or dying.

Alas I from what fine altitudes we fall,  
We builders upon earth, as day by day  
Speeds on, until we find that nearly all  
Of those we loved have fallen on the way.

With faiths, earth-built, on what seemed solid ground,  
Crumbling beneath our feet, a passing breath,  
Sighing for rest where rest was never found,  
And seldom seen but through the eyes of Death.

For here, a battered remnant, past all mending,  
Among the broken shards of life I lie,  
While, as of old, in manner condescending,  
The Levite stares at me, and passes by.

It was not always so ; misfortunes part  
Old friends : since I have nothing more to give,  
Creatures that broke my bread now break my heart,  
Nor care to know whether I die or live.

I judge them not : through all the ills that reach us  
Thy will, and not our own, is ever best ;  
It takes a bitter, life-long world to teach us  
Thy highest lesson, " This is not our rest."

Lord, take me home ; too long I've prayed that Thou  
Would'st give me life, in earthly strength delighting ;  
For such a gift I pray no longer now,  
For I am worn and weary of the fighting.

Who knows, but some one on that further shore  
For old sake's sake may greet me with a smile,  
And after years of sorrowing, I once more  
May grasp again the hands I held awhile ?

*OUTWARD-BOUND.*

"I have taken good-night at the world, and at all the  
fasherie of the same."—JOHN KNOX.

## I.

*GOOD-BYE, Old World ; shake hands before I go.*

I would not leave behind a single foe.  
We've lived for different objects, different ends ;  
My God has not been your God, nor yours mine :  
Something's amiss, Heaven only comprehends.  
As for your suitors, how could they combine  
With hearts that hungered for the higher love,  
Seeking the light that cometh from above ?  
Our forced copartnership, thank God, now stays  
At parting of the ways.  
I leave my burden with you here below ;  
Such burdens are not suffered where I go.

## II.

But thou, O Mother Earth ! must we too part—  
We, who have loved each other, heart for heart ?  
Have I not strained my ear to breeze and brook,  
By hill and valley, flower-enamelled sod,  
Till thou hast shown me in thy secret book,  
On every leaf, the signature of God,—  
Thy revelation, flashing from afar,  
The things that are not through the things that are ?  
O Mother, it were pain to part with you  
Unless I surely knew  
That earth, air, ocean, all thy mighty sum,  
Were but the mirror of a world to come.



*AT THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN.*

(To C. J. W. D.)

THE curtain's falling, and the lights burn low,  
So, with God's help, I'm ready now to go.  
I've seen life's melodrama, paid the price,  
Have known its loves and losses, hopes and fears,  
The laughter and the tears,  
And now, God knows, I would not see it twice.

I've crossed life's ocean, faced its blinding foam ;  
But now Heaven whispers, I am nearing home ;  
And though a storm-tossed hull I reach the shore,  
A thing of tattered sails and broken spars,  
Naked against the stars,  
I soon shall be at peace for evermore.

For if again I pass these waters through,  
I know the kingdom I am sailing to.  
What boots it where I lie ?—beneath the sod,  
Or down the dark impenetrable deep,  
Where wayworn seamen sleep ?  
All gates are good through which we pass to God.



Additional Poems.

*WITH THE DYING YEAR.*

MY hour has come, Lord, at the door  
Though death's dread shadow waits,  
I know no fear, if Thou be near,  
When I pass through the gates.

Death and the grave have lost their power,  
If Thou with me abide ;  
One step with Thee and I am free,  
Safe on the victor's side.

Sin-soiled of earth, O God, I plead  
No merit of my own,  
But by Thy grace, my trust I place  
In Christ, and Christ alone.

I look not for the crown of gold  
Thy saints alone deserve ;  
I dare not pray with these to reign,  
I only ask to serve.

Lord, in thy mansions manifold  
Some lowly place for me  
Where I might work, soul-free from sin,  
Is all I ask from Thee.

Some lowly place, where, though unseen  
Myself, I yet may see  
Those heaven-lit faces that have been  
A while withdrawn from me.

Too late of earth, as yet to sing  
The songs of higher spheres ;  
Let angels their Hosannas bring,  
And I will bring the tears.

Tears, Lord, of gratitude and joy,  
Let that my service be  
To him who walked this earth awhile,  
And died to succour me.

But yet I know, 'neath other skies,  
I'll reach my heart's desire,  
When by Thy Spirit I can rise  
And join the heavenly choir.

*THE PASSING YEAR—1900-1901.*

AGAIN the hour draws near,  
When hearts count o'er in sad debate  
Their loved and lost, the while they wait  
Beside the dying year.

His light is burning low,  
The sands of life run out apace,  
A shadow falls upon his face—  
Alas! our friend must go.

Outside, the wintry blast,  
In mournful requiem from above,  
Gives answer to the hearts whose love  
Clings to the buried past.

But now the hour is due,  
And men from every quarter hie,  
To bid the parting year good-bye,  
And welcome in the new.

Up from the surging crowd,  
The gathering storm has reached its height,  
A thousand voices fill the night,  
With greetings long and loud.

And hark ! above the roar  
The jangling bells ring in the morn ;  
The past is dead, the future born,  
And hope returns once more.

Love shall be with us yet.  
The seed that withers in the earth  
Shall quicken to another birth  
Out of the dead of it.

Not here, not here alone,  
But where beyond the touch of time,  
In sunshine of a fairer clime,  
To chance and change unknown ;

Where under holier wings,  
Uncumbered by the strife and strain,  
The incompleteness and the stain  
Of earth and earthly things;

Beyond our mortal ken,  
Where Love, beside life's outer gates,  
A consecrated presence, waits  
To greet us once again ;

When all that crossed our love,  
The pain, the fret, the anxious fears,  
The empty waste of absent years,  
And all the weight thereof

Will vex our hearts no more,  
The mists of earth will pass away,  
And melt into the perfect day  
That dawns upon that shore.



## *THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.*

(A CHRISTMAS CAROL.)

"He came into the world, and the world knew Him not."

THE heavens knew Thee, Lord, the angels singing  
Awoke the Syrian shepherds' mute surprise,  
And looking upwards where the heavens were ringing,  
They saw the God-sent guiding light arise,  
The pilot star that showed them from on high  
The lowly place of Thy nativity.

The waters knew Thee, tempests wild uproaring  
Sank into silence at Thy "Peace be still!"  
Nay, water turned to wine at Thy outpouring,  
And nature changed her nature at Thy will.  
The tossing waves that rose, and clashed, and beat  
Became a solid path beneath Thy feet.

Earth knew Thee, rocks were rent to their foundation,  
At Thy last hour, the sun withheld his light ;  
Insensate things rose up in reprobation

At that forsaken cry, that piteous sight.  
By that same world Thou cam'st to save, forgot ?  
Have mercy on us, Lord, we knew Thee not.

But now, praise God, the angels still are singing,  
And joy is gleaned from fields once sown in tears ;  
A happier earth her harvest home is bringing,  
The risen Sun has chased away our fears.  
A living light is on the mountain's brow,  
Have mercy on us, Lord, we know Thee now.



*VITA UMBRATILIS (2).*

I ENVY not the great  
Their world of care,  
With grandeur and with state,  
For daily fare ;  
To finish life's short lease  
I only pray for peace.

No painted roof, my God,  
Over my head ;  
Only the sweet green sod  
To be my bed ;  
Thy great blue dome above,  
And over all, Thy Love.

I seek no earthly praise,  
To give me aid ;  
Rather the silent ways,  
The quiet shade,  
Where no vain word may thwart  
Thy voice within my heart.

I envy not the wise,  
Who would unveil  
Those deeper mysteries  
Our hearts assail,  
Life's darkest paths are meet,  
If Thou but guide our feet.

Nor riches will I seek,  
With their display,  
I only would bespeak  
Some little way  
My daily wants above,  
To comfort those I love.

What need we more than food ?  
With daily sight  
Of nature's every mood  
For our delight,  
Earth's purest source of joy  
Pleasure without alloy.

The murmur of the bee,  
The warbling brook,  
The grace of flower and tree

An open book.  
An ever living voice  
Bidding the world rejoice.

Vast fields of shimmering seas,  
The azure heaven,  
Now slumbering in peace  
Now passion-driven,  
Earth's ever new surprise,  
The wonder of the skies !

The great star-curtain drawn  
Across the night !  
The mighty wings of dawn  
Flashing its light  
Upon the mountain's brow !  
And thou, my God, and thou



*THE LIGHT THAT LEADS.*

"I am the light of the world."—JOHN viii. 12.

**L**IIGHT of the world, lead on, Thou knowest best  
Where to direct our steps, not ours the way ;  
Teach us, O Lord, that this is not our rest,  
That here the soul is but a passing guest,  
And cannot stay.

Light of the world, lead on, O let us yet  
Be mindful of Thy sufferings, sinless One,  
What griefs endured, and with what meekness met,—  
Where shall we turn for light if we forget  
What thou hast done ?

Light of the world, lead on : be thou our mark,  
Earth's shifting lights mislead us and betray,  
They shed their transient gleam on Pleasure's bark,  
When storms arise they leave us in the dark,  
To grope our way.

Light of the world, lead on, Thy help extend,  
Till life is over and the victory won,  
Till from the universe from end to end  
One song shall rise to heaven, one prayer ascend,  
‘Thy will be done.’

Light of the world, lead on, in weal or woe  
We trust Thy guiding hand, and Thine alone,  
That Thou dost lead is all we ask to know,  
It is enough; where Thou would’st have us go  
Lead on, Lead on.



*THE DAY THAT I MET YOU.*

## A BORDER MEMORY.

"Hic dies, vere mihi festus, atras  
Eximet curas."—*Horace, Ode xiv, Book III.*

ALL thoughts that lift the soul above  
The daily common round,  
Wherever in the light of love  
The earth is hallowed ground  
They all bring back the happy hour,  
In memory ever new,  
By quiet Yarrow's ruined tower,  
The day that I met you.

What blessed spirit was my guide  
That perfect summer day?  
What unseen angel at my side  
Was leading me the way?  
The earth was beautiful to see,  
The skies were stainless blue,  
Ah! surely Heaven was leading me  
The day that I met you.

A sweeter music in the grove,  
The bird upon the tree  
The winds, the waters sang of love,  
For so it seemed to me ;  
A veil was lifted from my eyes,  
My life began anew,  
My soul went back to Paradise  
The day that I met you.

How had I lived till then, denied  
Of life's benignant grace :  
Oh, love ! to think I might have died  
Ere I had seen thy face !  
A higher light, a life more vast,  
A world I never knew,  
Rose up and blotted out the past  
The day that I met you.

Much I had read in men and books  
And travel everywhere,  
Of gallant deeds, and beauteous looks,  
Of ladies passing fair :  
And I had friends, none better, none,  
Dear comrades not a few—  
In all the world there was but one  
The day that I met you.

Old Border stories, knight and dame,  
Enshrined in poet's lore :  
The passionate pledges in the name  
Of love for evermore ;  
The dungeon keep the lovers' flight,  
The dreams our hearts pursue,  
Like phantoms faded out of sight,  
The day that I met you.

Alas ! the best that life affords  
We cloud with doubt and fear,  
We darken thoughts with darker words  
When love would make it clear ;  
By foolish fancies tossed and twirled  
We lose the good and true,  
I learned the secret of the world  
The day that I met you.



*THALIA.*

’TIS not thy beauty that I love the most—  
The silent summer-calm of thy sweet eyes,  
In whose serene uplifted loveliness  
The sheathed lightning lies !

Nor yet the symmetry, though that was born  
From some rich thought in heaven, whose motion free  
Was hung upon the breathless ebb and flow  
Of a delicious melody.

Not all the power thy beauty doth inherit  
Can bring my blood and brain to thy control ;  
But, oh ! I kneel to thine imperial spirit—  
Thy sweet and silent soul !

For its dominion is all human mood  
From Hope's high zenith, down to lowliest fears—  
From lightest love that plays on mortal blood  
To richest rain of tears.

Most finely capable of every tone  
Of human feeling: an *Æolian* lyre  
On whose sweet strings the winds may laugh, or moan  
In passion-tones of fire!

From laughter fairy light, whose thrilly sound  
Comes dancing on the wind, around, above—  
Down to the deep unspeakable profound  
Of holy, holy love!



## SONG.

LADY dearest,  
Sitting nearest,  
Ever in my inmost life;  
Aye beside me  
Star to guide me  
Through the world's weary strife !

Radiant beauty,  
Lowly duty,  
Dwell together in thine eyes,  
Like the last ray  
On dying Day,  
When Even's golden shadows rise ?

Ah! words can never  
Fix the river  
Of beauty trembling o'er thy face—  
Sweetly flowing,  
Coming, going,  
Wandering with a heedless grace!

Mystically,  
Musically,  
Shedding holiness around—  
Breathing, beaming,  
Flashing, gleaming,  
Subtle melody without a sound!

And, oh! the blushing,  
Kindness gushing,  
Through thy lustrous angel eyes!  
Like the flushing  
Dawn upushing  
Through the stainless summer skies!

Hear me, dearest !  
Ever nearest ;  
Hear me swear it—lovely one,  
By thy two orbs,  
Whose light absorbs  
My being, like the sun,  
By heaven above me,  
That I love thee—  
Fondly love thee—dearest one.



## TIME'S TEST.

OURS is no fading love,  
That dies with fading youth ;  
But hearts that God has knit in bonds  
Eternal as the truth.

Deep-seated in our life,  
In memory long ago ;  
Unblighted yet by summer sun,  
Unchilled by winter snow,

Ours was the early love  
At which the wise world grins ;  
Ah ! world, true love can look you blind,  
Then let him laugh who wins.

We leave the world alone,  
And let its wise ones laugh ;  
From us but once take love away  
And wisdom's wheat is chaff.

Ours was no light lip-truth—  
A word too easily given—  
But one of those old-fashioned bonds  
They say are made in heaven.

Deep-planted in our hearts,  
Deep-rooted in the years,  
Grown in the joyous light of love,  
And watered by her tears.

How long it seems, how long,  
And yet but yesterday,  
Since we two wandered hand in hand,  
When life was only play !

The sunny days we spent  
By that sweet river-side,  
'Twere vain to hope such hours as those  
On earth could long abide.

But though the years wear on,  
And children run about,  
And though your hair is lined with grey,  
And mine—is coming out,

Thank God, our hearts are strong !  
We've something left of youth ;  
While that dear truth of long ago,  
To us is still the truth.

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### *A PROTEST.*

#### ON HEARING SHAKSPEARE QUOTED.

'**B**EST men are moulded out of faults,' he said,  
And said it with a chuckle, as if he,  
From whom he quoted, he, the world's poet,  
Had given his sign and seal to justify  
The wrong. Oh God, that men should snatch the  
words  
From angels' lips to drag them in the mire !  
Distorting truth until her prophets seem  
To hold the creed of devils ! As if he,  
Sweet Shakspeare, mighty, many-sided mind,  
Was one that measured goodness by the evil  
That he knew ; one who did not see, that in

The exact proportion of such knowledge  
True wisdom falleth short, and that the fruit  
Of the forbidden tree is mainly food  
For fools! Therefore fit food for you, oh fools,  
Who warp the poet's words into a net  
To catch more deadly at the feet of him  
Whose unrepented faults but lead the way  
From sin to sin. Oh blind interpreters!  
You wrong, you desecrate the temple of  
The poet's soul, and make the blessed light  
That burns for ever in its holy fane  
A devil's light that ministers to sin  
And leads the world astray.



*CORROSION.*

LIFE you find a weary hill,  
And no wonder: Love left out,  
It is but an empty rout—  
Wretched still!

Vainly you may seek to fill  
Half your time with psalm and prayer;  
Heart awanting, it is air—  
Wretched still!

While thou labourest to fill  
The other half with other's shame,  
Feeding upon fallen fame,  
Wretched still!

Think not, Friend, you can distil  
Any kind of lasting bliss  
Out of such poor stuff as this—  
Wretched still!

Could'st thou thy desires fulfil,  
And see, with evil-gladdened eyes,  
Thy wrath upon thine enemies—  
Wretched still ?

Yea, if thou could'st curse and kill,  
If all the powers of hell were lent,  
It would not heal thy discontent—  
Wretched still !

It is not given to human skill  
To find the peace that never fails  
In any such materials—  
Wretched still !

Seek it in an altered will ;  
Seek it in a heart laid bare ;  
If you fail to find it there—  
Wretched still !



*WAITING.*

SUMMER is coming !

I hear the sound of her fairy feet  
Behind the distant hills,  
Rushing like the laughter sweet  
Of jubilant mountain rills.

Oh she is coming !

Summer is coming !

The trees stretch out their naked arms,  
There moves a low sweet humming  
Through the boughs till their cold blood warms,  
Whispering, 'She is coming.'

Oh she is coming !

Summer is coming !

Fighting her way through fields of azure,  
Shooting a hundred miles  
Shafts of gold through each cloud embrasure,  
Storming the world with smiles.

Oh she is coming !

Summer is coming !  
A warmer breath is in the air,  
And through the meadow grasses  
A lifting up of dewy hair  
And gentle murmuring passes.  
Oh she is coming !

Summer is coming !  
They tell me all, in tears and pain,  
My life is passing by ;  
But I must see her once again,  
Once more before I die.  
Oh she is coming !







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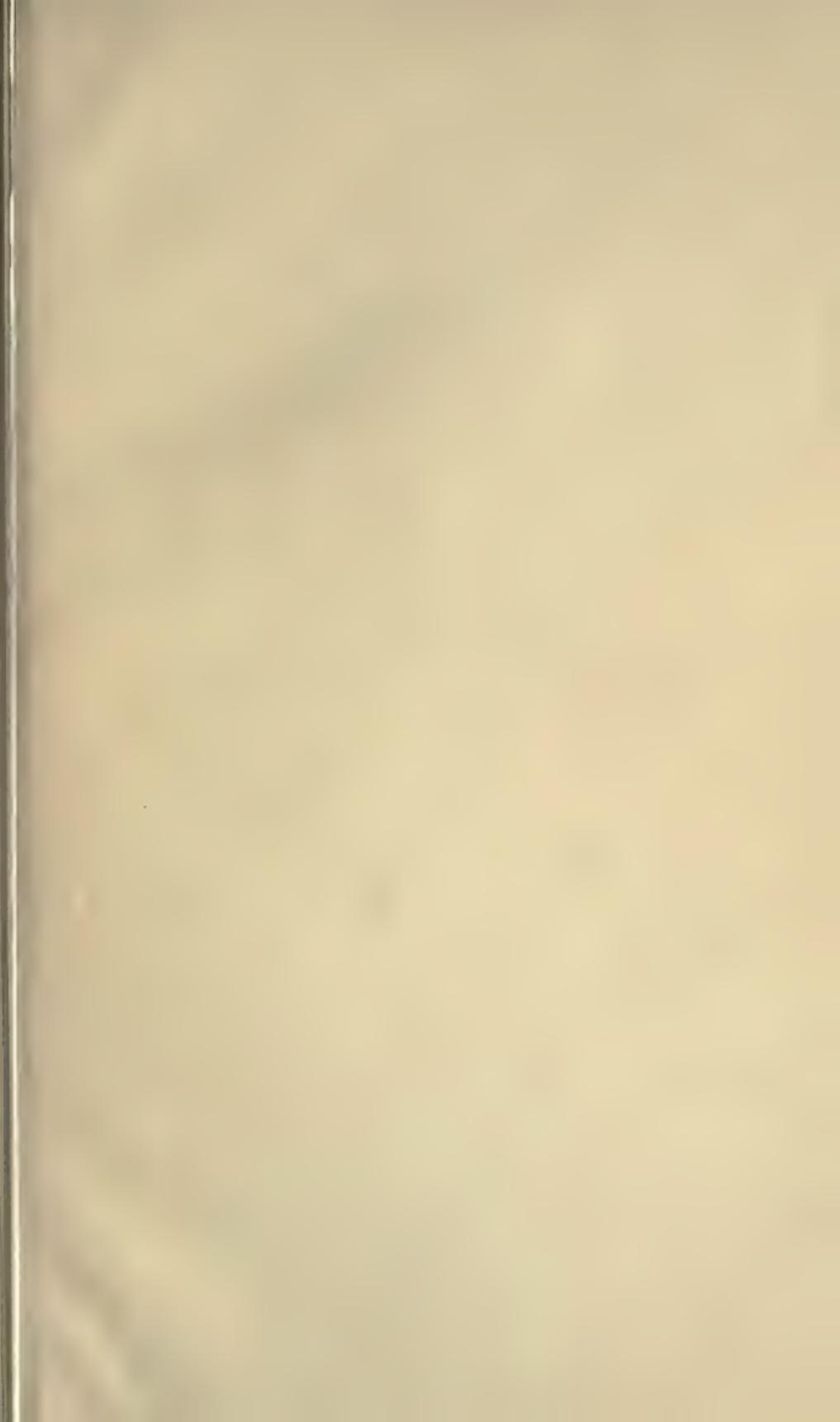
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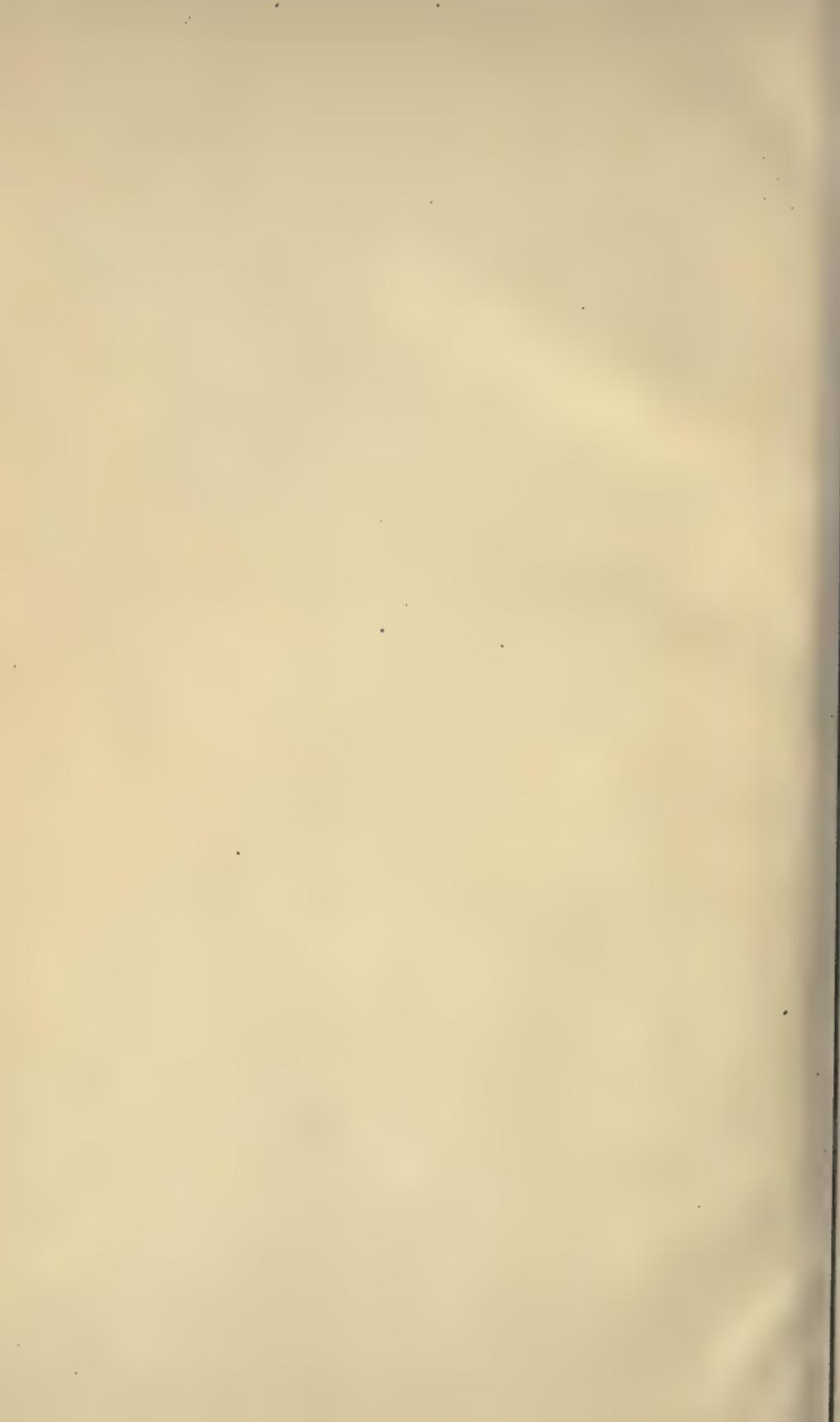
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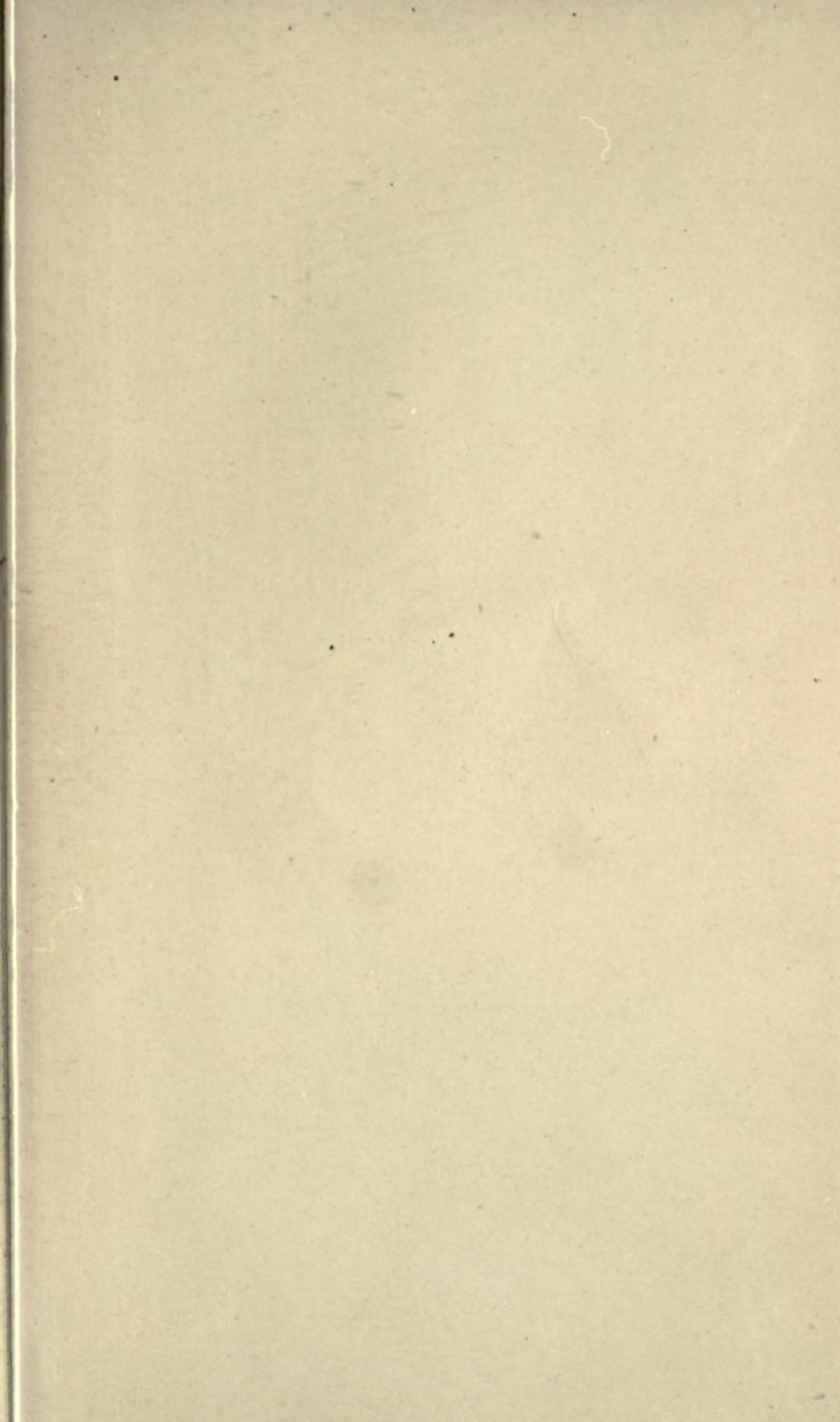
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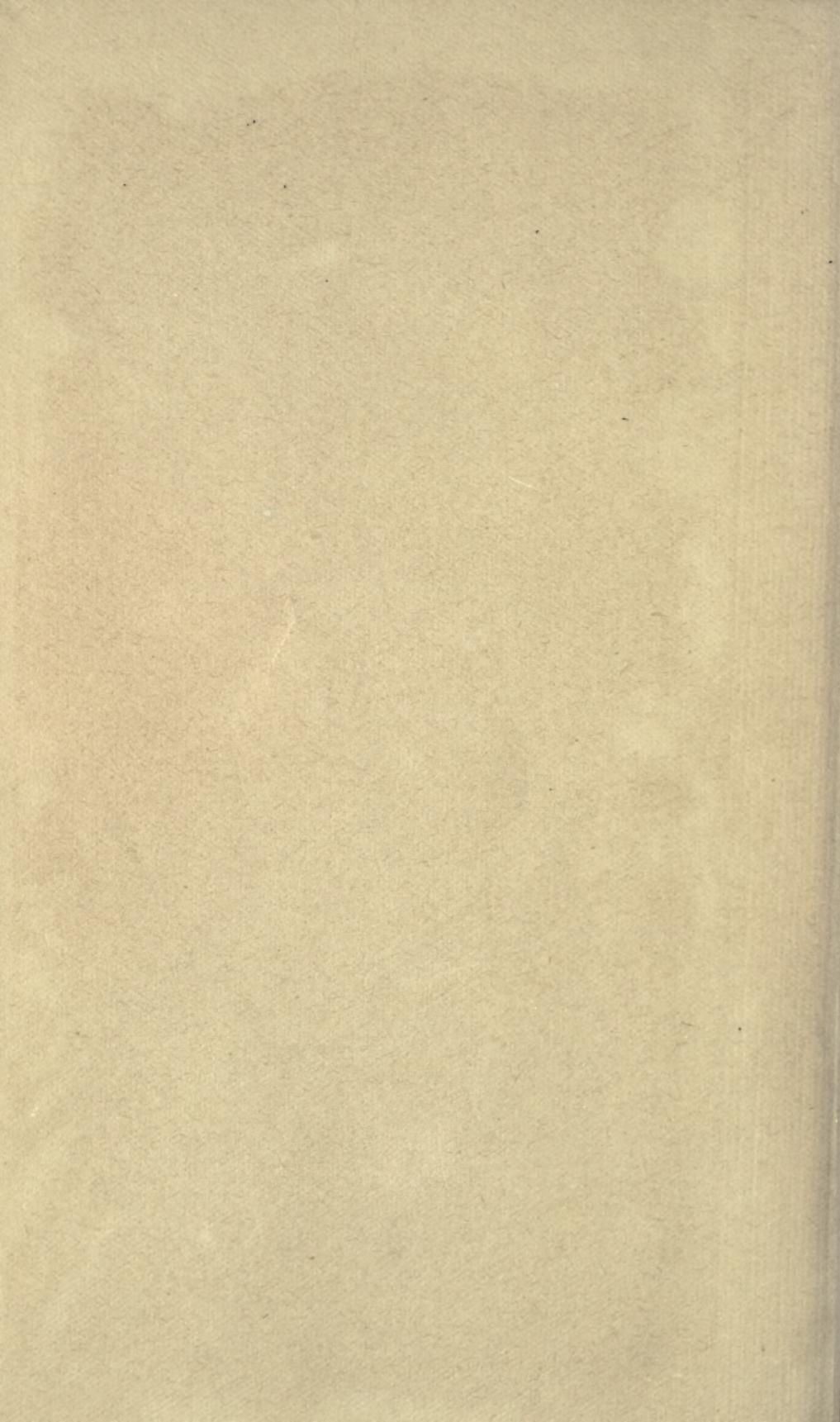
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